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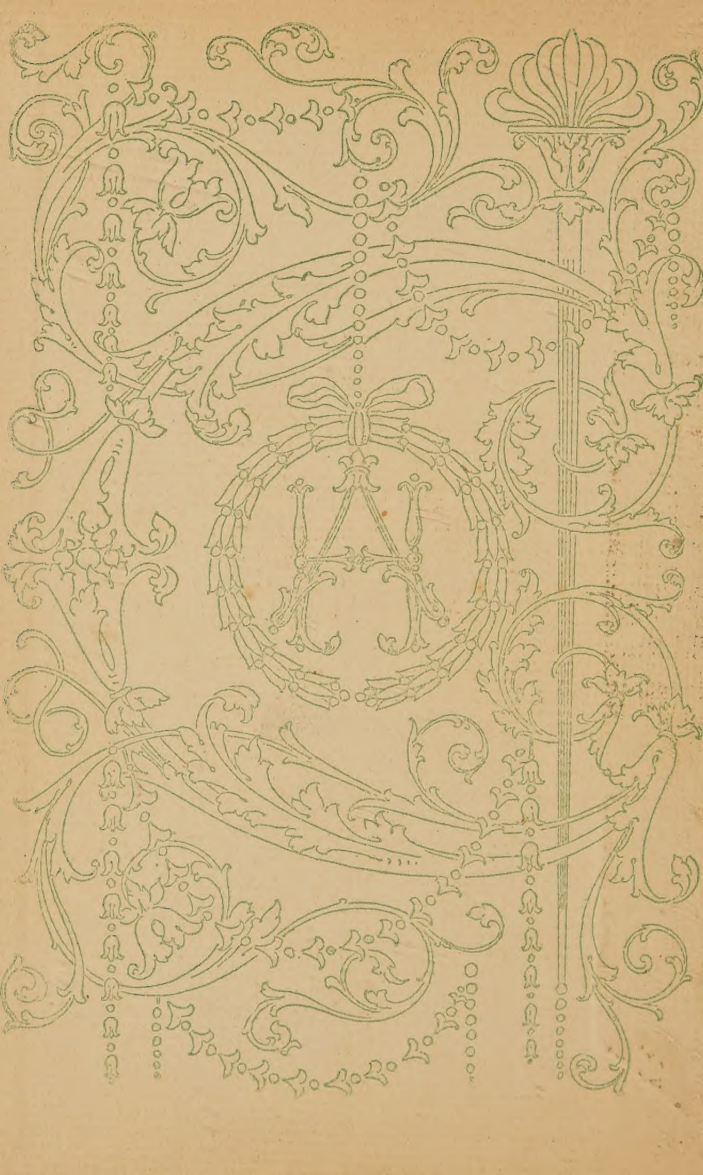

HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY
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SIENKIEWICZ
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LET US FOLLOW HIM

AND OTHER STORIES

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LET US FOLLOW HIM.

CHAPTER I.

Caius Septimus Cinna was a Roman patrician. His only days had been spent with the Legionaries amid the hard experience of camp life. Though slightly curtailed, his fortune was still enormous, and after returning to Roma, he enjoyed glory and all the pleasures of life.

His nights were spent in banqueting in superb suburban villas; his days with fencing with lannists, or in conversation with rhetors, at tepidaries (where disputes were carried on and the gossip related), or in circuses, races, and wrest-

lings of gladiators, or amongst Grecian lutinists, Thracian diviners, and beautiful women dancers from the islands of Achipel. Being a descendant, on his mother's side, from the one time famous family of Lucullus, he inherited a taste for sumptuous eating. On his table was served Grecian wines, oysters from Neapolis, Numidian squirrels, and fat locust, stewed with honey, from Pontus.

Everything that Roma possessed, Cinna must possess, also—from the fishes of the Red Sea to white partridges from the banks of Boristenes. But he enjoyed not only as a soldier, who goes mad, but as a patrician capable of making fastidious selections. He made himself believe in, and perhaps created this love for beautiful things; statues delved from the ruins of Corinth, epilychnes from Attica, Etruscan or imported vases from misty Sericum, Roman mosaics, textures from the banks of the Euphrates. Ara-

bian odors, and all those rare trifles which filled up the empty patrician life.

As a connoisseur and amateur, he also knew how to talk about them with toothless old men, who, sitting at the table, adorned their heads with garlands of roses, and who, after a banquet, chew flowers of heliotrope, in order to make their breath odorous. He appreciated also the beauty of Cicero's period, and of Horace or Ovid's verse. Being educated by an Athenian rhetor, he spoke Greek fluently, recited whole passages of the "Iliad," and during banquets, could sing Anacreon's songs until he got drunk or hoarse.

Owing to the training of his teacher and other rhetors he was familiarized with the philosophy of the period, and was acquainted with the various academies raised in Greece and the Colonies, and knew these were in ruins. He was personally acquainted with many stoics,

whom he did not particularly admire, considering them rather as a political party, and moreover, as hypochondriacs opposed to a pleasurable life. Skeptics were very often at his table, and while eating, they subverted whole doctrines. While drinking costly wines they pronounced delight as a vanity, and truth to be impenetrable; and the aim of a sage to be only inert tranquility.

All these voices reverberated from his ears, not penetrating through his mind. He did not profess any principles, and did not care to possess them. Cato seemed to him as an amalgam of great character with great folly. He considered life as a sea, over which winds blow, and the wise man's only task so to manipulate with sail, that they should push the boat forward. Besides, he valued strong arms, which he himself possessed; a healthy stomach, which he himself possessed; and Roman head with eagle pro-

file and prominent jaws, which he himself possessed. With these means he was sure one could pass through life comfortably.

Belonging not to the school of the skeptics, yet was he a skeptic in life; but he was at the same time also hedonic,[1] though he knew that delight is not happiness. He was not acquainted with the true doctrine of Epicurus, and therefore regarded himself as an epicurean.

In general he looked at philosophy as a mental exercise not worse than the fencing, taught by the lannists. As soon as he had too much of dissertation, he went to circuses to look at blood.

He believed neither in gods nor virtue, truth nor happiness, but in auguries; he had his own prepossessions; and the mysterious beliefs of the East excited his curiosity.

He was a good master to his slaves,

[1] Follower of Aristipus.

inasmuch as temporary spleen did not make him cruel. He believed that life is like a vast amphore, that the better wine it contains the darker its color: consequently, he endeavored to fill up his own with the best kind. He did not love anybody: but he liked many things, and amongst them, his own eagle head with magnificent skull, and his elegant patrician foot.

At the beginning of this merry period of his life, he also liked to excite the admiration of Roma, and several times he was successful: but later on this ceased also to interest him.

CHAPTER II.

At last Cinna became bankrupt and his creditors seized and distributed his estate. He was now weary, as if after great labor. He felt surfeit and moreover great perturbation. He had enjoyed his wealth, enjoyed love (as it was then conceived), enjoyed delight, glory, and adventures; got acquainted, more or less, with the extent of human thought; associated with poetry and art; therefore he could think he took from life all that it could give to him. And yet he feels as if he had neglected something, something most important. He did not know, however, what it was, and in vain he racked his brain about it. He tried more than once to shake off these meditations and agitations; tried to persuade

himself into the belief that there is nothing more in life, and even cannot be more—but in that moment his perturbation, instead of being lesser, grew up instantly to such vast proportion, that he seemed as if bearing not only his own burden, but the whole of Roma's. He envied skeptics, at the same time regarding them as fools; for they maintained that a vacuum can be filled with nothing. As if he were a dual being, one surprised with his own deranged feelings, and the other acknowledging them as justified.

Soon after his bankruptcy, Cinna was appointed to an office and sent to Alexandria. It was gained through family influence to give him an opportunity to rebuild his lost fortune in that rich country. But his perturbation embarked with him, and from the port of Brundisium followed him across the sea. He expected at Alexandria, being engaged

with new duties, and meeting new people, a new world, new impressions, to get rid of the troublesome companion; but was disappointed. Like Demeter's seed, which, when transplanted from Italy to the fertile cornfield of the Delta, grew more exuberantly, so it was also with Cinna's deranged state of feeling, which from a large shrub, had grown into a gigantic cedar, throwing a still larger shadow upon his soul.

At the beginning, in order to stifle his sensibilities, Cinna tried to live in the same manner as he used to in Roma. Alexandria was a delightful city, full of Greek women with fallow hair and light complexion, which the Egyptian sun covered with transparent amber gloss. In the company of these women he sought to assuage his feelings.

As soon as this proved ineffectual he began to think of suicide. Many of his companions had got rid of life's afflic-

tions in this manner, and for even less frivolous reasons than those of Cinna: oftentimes only through spleen, or a void or a want of inclination to enjoy any more. If the slave held the sword dexterously and strongly enough, a single moment was sufficient to end everything. Cinna betook himself to that thought, but when he had almost resolved to execute it, a strange dream withheld him. He dreamed that while crossing a river, he beheld beyond it, his perturbation, in a figure of an emaciated slave, who, bowing, said to him: "I arrived first, in order to receive you." Cinna, for the first time in his life, took fright; for he understood that if he could not think of the future existence without agitation, then they must go both there again in company.

In this extremity, he resolved to draw nearer to the sages, who were plenty in Serapeum. He thought that perhaps

through them, he might find a solution of the puzzle. In fact, however, they were unable to solve anything; but instead, nominated him "τον μουσειον" (which title was usually granted to Romans of high degree and importance). It was small comfort, anyhow, and seemed irony that patent for a sage be given to the man who could not answer the question, which interested him most. Cinna presumed, however, that may be, Serapeum had not yet displayed its whole wisdom, and therefore he must not yet lose hope.

Most active among sages in Alexandria was magnanimous Tymon of Athens, a wealthy man and a Roman citizen. He had come to Alexandria for the purpose of studying deeper into the mysterious knowledge of the Egyptians, and had dwelt there for several years. It was said that in the library there was no parchment or papyrus, which he had

not read; and that he possessed all human knowledge. Besides, he was a mild and indulgent man.

Cinna at once distinguished him from the many pedants and commentators with brains, and soon formed a close acquaintance which afterwards became familiar and grew into an intimate friendship.

The young Roman admired his proficiency in dialectic, the eloquence and prudence with which the old man talked about sublime things, concerning the destination of man and the universe.

It was striking, particularly that his prudence was combined with a certain melancholy. After their friendship had become established, Cinna minded to ask the old man for the reason of this sadness, and also to lay his own heart open to him. And at last it was come to this.

CHAPTER III.

One evening, after an animated discussion on the peregrination of souls, when they were left alone upon the terrace that overlooked the sea, Cinna, having taken Tymon's hand, openly confessed to him concerning the things that most burdened and tormented his life, and the reasons for which he had endeavored to associate with sages and philosophers from the temple of Serapis.[1]

"At least, I profited from it, inasmuch," he said at length, "that I met you, Tymon, and I know now, that if you will not solve the puzzle of my life, no one else is able to do it."

Tymon gazed steadfastly on the

[1]Serapeum.

depths of the sea in which the new moon reflected, and after a while he said:

"Have you not seen those flights of birds, which migrate here for the winter, from the dusks of the North? Do you know what they seek in Egypt?"

"I do. The warmth and the light."

"Human souls also seek the warmth, which is love; and the light, which is truth. The birds know where to fly for their good; but Souls fly in pathless tracks, being mistaken, sorrowful, and uneasy."

"Why, gentle Tymon, can I not find the way?"

"Before this, the rest was in the gods. To-day the belief in them has burned out like oil in a lamp. After that, it was meant that philosophy would shine for a soul as the sun of truth; but nowadays, as you yourself know, the best here as well as in Roma, and in the Academy in Athens, are skeptics who thought to

bring peace and brought uneasiness instead. For to give up the warmth and the light, is the same as to leave the soul in darkness, which means disturbance. And then, with outstretched arms, we go groping along seeking an exit. . . ."

"And did you, too, find it not?"

"I sought, but was unsuccessful. You sought in delight, I in contemplation, and we are both in the midst of the same darkness. Know, therefore, that you are not alone tortured, and that in your soul tortures the soul of universe. Why ceased you not long ago, to believe in idols?"

"In Roma they are still publicly worshiped, and even new ones are imported from Asia and Egypt; but I think those who still believe in them truly, are only those hucksters of vegetables who come every morning from the villages to the city.

"And those exclusively are easy."

"Just as well as those who in Egypt do bow before cats and onions."

"Just as well as those who, like satiate beasts, desire nothing but to sleep after eating."

"If that be so, is life worth living?"

"How know we what comes after death?"

"Then what difference is betwixt you and the skeptics?"

"Skeptics admit darkness, or at least feign to do so, and I torture in it."

"And see you no salvation?"

Tymon was silent, then he said, slowly and with apparent hesitation:

"I expect."

"From whence?"

"I know not."

And bowing his head upon the hand as if he was under the influence of the profound tranquility of the air, he began to speak with also deadened voice:

"'Tis strange, but sometimes it seems

to me that if the universe contained nothing more than that which we already know; and if we could be nothing else than we are now; we could have no disturbance. So then, I derived from the sickness, the hope of health. The belief in Olympus and philosophy have died, but some new truth still unknown to me might be the source of health."

Unexpectedly, this conversation afforded Cinna great relief. Having learned that not only he alone is ill, but also the whole universe is affected, he felt as if some one had lifted from him his burden, divided it, and put it on thousands of shoulders.

CHAPTER IV.

Thereafter the friendship uniting Cinna with the old Greek became more intimate. More frequently they called upon each other, and shared each other's thoughts, like bread at the table. As for the rest, Cinna, notwithstanding his experiences and the weariness which follows satiated enjoyment, was too young and life still preserved for him some unknown attractions, and one of these he had just found in Tymon's only daughter, Antea.

Her fame was not less than that of her father. She was admired by eminent Romans who were in the habit of visiting her father's house, by Greeks, by philosophers from Serapeum, and by the people. Tymon did not shut her up in a

gyneceum, as were other women; he endeavored to transfuse into her all that he himself knew. When she had grown from childhood, he read with her Grecian, and even Roman, and Hebrew books, because nature had favored her with an extraordinary memory and being reared in polyglotic Alexandria, she became fluent in those languages. She was his companion in thoughts; she frequently took part in the disputes which occurred during symposiums at Tymon's home; and not seldom in the labyrinth of difficult problems, she knew, like Ariadne, how to go not out of the right way, and had the ability to conduct others likewise.

Her father admired and adored her. Besides, she was surrounded with the charm of mystery and almost sanctity, because of foretelling dreams, in which she saw things invisible to ordinary mortal eye.

The old sage loved her like his own soul; still more, for he was afraid to lose her; because she had ofttimes said that in her dreams appeared some ominous creatures and some strange light, about which she knew not whether it were a source of life or death.

Meanwhile, however, she was surrounded with love. The Egyptians visiting Tymon's home, called her Lote, maybe for the reason that lotus on the banks of the Nile received divine adoration and maybe for the reason that the one who saw her once could forget the whole world; because her beauty was equal to her knowledge. The Egyptian sun had not shadowed her face, in which the rosy rays of the dawn seemed to be shut up as if in a translucent pearl shell. Her eyes had the blue of the Nile and their glance flowed from an unknown whereabouts just as the waters of that mysterious river. As soon as Cinna saw

and heard her, he had a great mind to build to her honor an altar in the atrium of his house and consecrate white pigeons upon it. He had met thousands of women from the deep North as well as Numidians, black as lava; but heretofore he had met neither such a form nor such a soul. The more often he looked at her and listened to her words, the more he was astonished. Sometimes he who believed not in idols, presumed that Antea could not be Tymon's daughter, but the daughter of some god; and consequently she was only half a woman and half an immortal being.

Soon after he fell in love with her, in unexpected, huge, stubborn love, as much different from his former feelings as Antea was different from other women. He wanted to possess her merely in order to adore her, and for the possession he was ready to sacrifice his blood. He felt he would prefer to be

a beggar with Antea, than a Caesar without her. Like a water spout which snatches everything that is in its reach, thus Cinna's love seized his soul, his heart, his thoughts, his days and nights, and everything that is a part of life—and at last also seized Antea.

"Tu felix (thou art happy), Cinna," said his friends.

"Tu felix, Cinna," he repeated to himself.

When at last he had married her; when her divine lips had uttered those sacramental words: "Where you Caius are, thither I, Caia, am also"—then it seemed to him that his happiness would be, like a sea, inexhaustible and boundless.

CHAPTER V.

A year had passed and at home the young wife always received adoration almost like to that of a goddess. She was to her husband, the pupil of his eye—love, wisdom, light. But Cinna, comparing his happiness with the sea, had forgotten about its reflux. After a year Antea was afflicted with a merciless, unknown disease. Her dreams changed into dreadful visions, which exhausted her life. The rays of dawn went out from her face, leaving only the translucency of pearl's shell; her hands became translucent also; her eyes sank deeper under her forehead, and thus that rosy lotus became more and more a white one, as white as the face of the dead. Goshawks, it was noticed, had already commenced

to hover in the air above Cinna's house, which in Egypt was regarded as the bad omen of announcing death. Her visions became more and more dreadful. When at noon time, the sun with his white rays overflowing the world, and when the city was sunk into deep tranquillity—it seemed to Antea that she heard all around her the rapid steps of some invisible creatures, and that in the depth of the air she saw a meager, yellow death's face, looking at her with black eyes, as if calling upon her to go somewhere, to some mysterious and fearful dusk. At that time Antea trembled as in a fever; her pale forehead was covered with a cold sweat, and that adored priestess of the fireside was changed into a defenseless and frightened child, and clasping herself to her husband's bosom, she repeated with white lips: "Save me, Caius! Guard me!"

Caius would fall upon any creature

that Persephona might loose from underground. Round about, as usual, at noontime, were no people. The white brightness of the sun, overspread the city and the sea seemed to burn in it; and in the depth of tranquility was only heard the puling of the goshawks hovering in the air above the house.

The visions became more and more frequent till at last they appeared daily. They persecuted Antea out of doors, as well as at home, in atrium, and in halls. Cinna, following the advice of the physicians, brought Egyptian sambucins and Bedouins, who play upon clay fifes; in order to deafen with music the roaring of the invisible creatures—but it proved of no avail, for Antea heard it still in the depth of the loudest noise. As soon as the sun had risen so high that the shadow laid at a man's feet, like a robe fallen from the shoulders, then in the vibrating air from the heat appeared again that

death's face and looking with glassy eyes at Antea, moved back slowly, as if it wanted to tell her: "Come after me!"

Now and then it seemed to Antea that its lips moved slightly, and again, that some ugly, black beetles came out from it and ran toward her. The thought itself was sufficient to fill up her eyes with fear; and at length life became a dreadful torture for her, so dreadful that she besought Cinna to hold up a sword or to permit her to drink poison.

He knew that he was unable to do it. With the same sword he would rather rip up his own veins for her sake, but he could not kill her. When he imagined that dear, lifeless head with closed eyes, full of frosty peace, and that bosom rent with his own sword—he felt he must go mad before he could do it.

He was told by a certain Grecian physician, it was Hecate that appeared to Antea, and those invisible creatures, whose

roaring frightened her, belong to the retinue of that goddess. According to the opinion of the physician there was no remedy, for who saw Hecate, must die.

Cinna, who not long before would laugh at the belief in Hecate, now consecrated to her a hecatomb. But it proved of no avail, and the next day at noon time again those gloomy eyes looked at Antea.

They tried to cover her head, but she saw the death's face even through the thickest coverings. When she was shut up in a dark room the face shone from the wall with a pale lustre and gazed upon her.

Evenings the sick woman felt better. Then she sank into such a sound sleep that Cinna and Tymon often doubted she would ever awake again. She soon became so ill that she could not walk without assistance. She had to be carried in a litter.

Cinna's old agitations returned and entirely seized upon him. He feared Antea's death, and besides he became possessed with the strange supposition that her disease was in some mysterious way connected with everything that he talked about in his first candid conversation with Tymon. It may be that the old man thought the same, but Cinna, however, neither wanted nor had the courage to ask him about it. In the meantime the sick wife faded like a flower, in the calyx of which has nestled a baneful, virulent spider.

Cinna, however, hoplessly yet desperately, attempted everything to save her. First he conveyed her to the wilds near Memphis; but when the tranquillity of the pyramids did not release her from the dreadful vision he returned to Alexandria and surrounded her with diviners, conjurers, who charmed diseases and with every kind of shameless rabble who by

means of miraculous medicines, profited from people's credulity. But there was nothing left to be selected, and therefore Cinna had tried everything.

At that time there came from Cesarea to Alexander a famous Jewish physician, Joseph Kuza's son. Cinna immediately engaged him to attend his wife, and for a while hope returned to his heart. Joseph, who did not believe in Grecian and Roman idols, contemptuously spurned the opinion about Hecate. He presumed instead that she was possessed by demons and therefore advised to quit Egypt, where, besides demons, were also noxious exhalations rising from the marshy delta, which could also be injurious to her health. He advised also (perhaps for the reason that he himself was a Jew) to go to Jerusalem, as it was a city to which demons have no access, and in which the climate is dry and healthy.

Cinna, so much the more willingly followed this advice, for there was none other left, and secondly that in Jerusalem ruled a procurator with whom he was acquainted and whose ancestors were at one time clients of his family.

And in fact procurator Pontius received them with open arms and presented to them his own summer residence, situated near the Walls. But Cinna's hope had vanished even before they had arrived. The death's face was still looking at Antea, even on board the galley; and after arriving the patient was expecting noontime with the same deadly fear as in Alexandria.

And thus the days began to pass away sorrowfully in fear, in despair and expectation of death.

CHAPTER VI.

Notwithstanding the early hour, the running fountain and the shadowed portico, there was in the atrium an awful warmth, for the marble became hot from the spring sun; but nearby the house stood an old divaricate pistachia, shadowing considerable space round about. As it was an open place and therefore more exposed to the blast of the wind, Cinna caused to be set there a litter adorned with hyacinths and apple blossoms, in which Antea reposed. Next, having set himself close by her, he laid his hand upon her pale alabaster-like hands and asked:

"How do you feel here, Carrissima?"

"Good," she answered in a very low tone.

And she half closed her eyes as if she

were overpowered with sleep. Then followed silence; merely the breeze moved the branches of the pistachia, and around the litter, therefore, twinkled golden spots of light, breaking through the leaves, and swarms of locusts buzzed among the stones.

After a while the sick wife opened her eyes.

"Cains," she said, "is it true that in this country appeared a philosopher, who makes whole the sick?"

"Here such a man is called a prophet. I have heard of him, and wished to bid him call upon you, but he proved to be a false performer of miracles. Besides he blasphemed against the temple and religion of this country, consequently the procurator condemned him to die and even to-day he is to be crucified."

Antea hung down her head.

"Time will cure you," said Cinna, having seen the sorrow, which also reflected upon his face.

"The time is at the service of death and not of life," she answered slowly.

Silence again reigned. Still continuously twinkled the golden spots; locusts hissed more loudly, and small lizards seeking for the sunny spots, moved out of the clefts upon the stones.

Cinna ever and anon looked at Antea and for the thousandth time, desperate thoughts passed through his mind, that all was past remedy and that there was not one spark of hope left, and that soon this beloved creature would become only as a shadow which passes away like a dream and a handful of dust in the columbarium. Already now she, with closed eyes and laying in the depth of flowers in the litter, looked like one dead.

"I will go after you," Cinna inwardly repeated.

Suddenly there were heard some steps. Antea's face immediately became pale as chalk; her half-open lips breathed

fast; her bosom heaved quickly. The unfortunate martyr was sure that the train of invisible creatures, which precedes the appearance of the death's face with glassy eyes, drew nigh; but Cinna, grasping her hands, began to calm her.

"Do not fear, Antea, those steps, I hear also."

After a while he added:

"It is Pontius coming to us."

And, in fact, upon the turning of the path, had appeared the procurator, accompanied by two slaves. He was not a young man, but with round, carefully shaved face and full of artificial gravity, but at the same time with an air of affliction and weariness.

"Salutation to you, gentle Cinna, and you, divine Antea," he said, entering under the shadow of the pistachia. "Then after a chilly night the day became warm. I wish that this day would be fortunate for you both, and that Antea's

health would blow again like these hyacinths and little branches of apple tree, beautifying her litter."

"Peace with you and welcome," replied Cinna.

The procurator, having set himself upon a fragment of rock, gazed upon Antea for a while with slightly knit brow and said:

"Solitude is the mother of sorrow and illness; while on the contrary, in the midst of a crowd there is no room for fear; I will give you, therefore, one advice Unfortunately this is not Cesarea nor Antioch; there are neither games nor races here, because of the character of the people, who would demolish every circus the day following its appearance. Here you hear but one word: "The law of God," and to this institution anything is hateful. I would rather prefer to live in Scythia than here."

"About what do you want to speak, Pilate?"

"Indeed, I swerved from the subject. But the troubles caused it. I said, in the depth of a crowd, there is no room for fear. So it happens that you may have to-day a spectacle. Here in Jerusalem we must be satisfied with anything whatever; but first of all I would advise that Antea should be there at noontime, in the midst of the crowd. To-day three men will die upon the cross. That is better than no show at all. Moreover, because of Passover, the city is invaded by a rabble of the most strange people gathered from all over the country. You may stand as spectators to that mish-mash. I will cause to be reserved for you the best place close by the crosses. I hope that the condemned will die resolutely. One of them is a strange man. He presents himself as the Son of God; he is as mild as a dove and, in fact, he

committed nothing that would merit capital punishment."

"And you, however, condemned him to the cross?"

"I wanted to avoid trouble as well as to touch not the nest of wasps, which buzzes round the Temple. Complaints about me are already sent to Roma. As for the rest, there is not in question any Roman citizen.

"For that reason, nevertheless, the man will not suffer less."

The procurator did not answer this; and after a while he started to speak, as if to himself.

"One thing is intolerable to me—that is exaggeration. One who uses that word in my presence spoils my humor for all the day. This is an excellent way, which, in my opinion, is indicated. But no other place exists in the world where this principle is less observed than here. How it all torments me! how torments

me! No peace in anything, no balance in anything, either in men or in nature. For example: Now is spring, and nights are chilly, but during the day time being so warm it is impossible to step over the stones. Noon is not near yet, and see how warm it is now. As for the people, better to speak not. I remain here simply because I am obliged to. No matter! Again I would wander from the subject. Go to witness the crucifixion. No doubt that the Nazarene will meet death fearlessly. I caused him to be lashed, hoping to save him from death. I am not cruel. When beaten, he was patient as a lamb and blessed the people; when bleeding, he lifted up his eyes and prayed. That is the most marvelous man I have ever seen in my life. From early morning, on his account, my wife has bothered me, constantly repeating: "Don't permit the innocent to die." I desired to save him. I did mount "bima" twice,

and addressed those obstinate priests and that scurvy rabble. But in answer they hold up their heads; from ear to ear wide open, gaped their jaws, and there was heard but one cry:

"Crucify!"

"And you submitted," said Cinna.

"Otherwise there would be revolt in the city, and I am posted here to maintain peace. I must perform my duty. I do not like exaggeration, and besides I am deadly tired. But when once I undertake a thing, for the public welfare, I do not hesitate to sacrifice the life of one man, particularly if he is unknown and nobody will interpose for him. So much the worse for him that he is not a Roman citizen."

"The sun shines not above Roma only," whispered Antea.

"Divine Antea," responded the procurator, "I could reply that it shines all over the world for Roman authority,

consequently for its sake everything should be sacrificed and revolts strike at the foundation of our authority. But above all I beseech you do not demand from me the change of the sentence. Cinna also will tell you it is an impossibility for a decree once granted can be changed only by Caesar himself. Even if I desired, I could not do it. Is it not true, Caius?"

"That is true."

These words were evidently unpleasant to Antea, for she said, thinking perhaps about herself:

"So then we may suffer and die, being not guilty?"

"None are guiltless," answered Pontius. "That Nazarene did not commit crime, and therefore as procurator I washed my hands. But as a man, I reprobate his doctrine. I purposely discoursed with him for a long while in order to come at its bottom and I ascer-

tained he proclaims still unheard of things. Then it is his own fault. The universe must be upheld upon common sense. Who questions that virtue is necessary? Certainly not I. Even the stoics teach us merely to bear our reverses patiently, but they do not demand that we renounce everything from our estate till our meal. Tell us, Cinna (you are a sensible man), what would you think about me if I, without any reason, should give this house in which you dwell to those ragamuffins who bask in the sun by Joppa gate? And he demands just such a thing. Besides he proclaims that it is our duty to love all men without distinction—Jews as well as Romans, Romans as Egyptians, Egyptians as Ethiopians and so on. I avow it was too much for me. When his life was in question, he deported himself as if it concerned somebody else—taught and prayed. I am not obliged to assist a man

who for himself cares not. He who knows not how to observe a just medium in everything is not a prudent man. Besides he calls himself the son of God and subverts the principles upon which the universe is founded, consequently he is pernicious to humanity. Let him think in his mind as he wish, but not subvert. As a man I protest against his dogmas. Suppose that I do not believe in gods, that is my affair. I acknowledge, however, the necessity of religion and I confess it publicly, because I think that it is a bridle for the people. Horses should be harnessed and strongly harnessed, too. As for the rest, death to such a Nazarene should not be frightful for he urges that he will rise again from the dead."

Cinna and Antea looked at each other in amaze.

"That he will rise from the dead?"

"No less no more; after three days. So at least proclaim his disciples. I for-

got to ask him about it. As for the rest, it makes no difference, for death makes us free from all promises. So even if he should not rise, he would not lose anything; for according to his dogmas, only after death begins eternal life together with real happiness. Indeed he speaks of it as a man who is positively sure. There is more light in his Hades than here with our sun and the more one suffers now the surer he can be to enter in there: the only condition of it is—to love, to love, and again to love.

"A strange doctrine," Antea said.

"And those people clamored for you: "Crucify him!?" asked Cinna.

"And I even am not surprised, for hatred is the essence of these people, and they would cry for the cross for love?"

Antea, with her emaciated hand, stroked her forehead. "And he is positive that it is possible to live and be happy after death?"

"Therefore he is not afraid of the cross nor death."

"How good it would be, Cinna!"

A while after she questioned again.

"From whence knows he of this?"

The procurator waved his hand.

"He says he knows it from the father of all men, who is to the Jews as Jove is to us, with the only difference that, according to the words of the Nazarene, he is one, singular, and merciful.

"How good it would be," repeated the sick wife.

Cinna opened his mouth as if to speak, but stopped, and the conversation ceased. Pontius evidently continued to contemplate the Nazarene's queer doctrines, for he tossed his head, and every moment shrugged his shoulders. At last he rose and began to take leave of them.

Suddenly Antea said: "Caius, let us go to see that Nazarene."

"Make haste," said Pilate, as he left, "the procession will start soon."

CHAPTER VII.

In the morning the day was sunny and serene, but about noon the sky began to be overcast. From the north-east were moving dark or copper-like clouds. They were more restless than extensive as if pregnant with storm. Here and there still looked through them the deep blue sky; but it was evident that they soon, as one solid mass, would veil the whole horizon. By that time the sun still threw fire and gold upon their protruding edges. Above the city and adjacent hills was stretched a considerable expanse of still clear sky; there was no wind as yet.

On an elevated plain called Golgotha here and there were already standing small groups of men who had preceded

the procession that was to start from the city.

The sun illuminated the broad, rocky tracts; waste, sterile and sad.

Beneath Golgotha, towards the city's walls, extended a plain, here and there undulated by rocks, but less waste. Here and there were seen fig trees with but few and poor leaves, growing out of the clefts, in which had collected a little fertile earth. Here and there in the distance glittered in the sun's rays white painted graves, and flat roofed buildings rose, clung to the rocky steeps like swallow's nests. At present exceptionally, because of nigh holy days, and the great afflux of strangers from the country were built near by the walls, many booths and tents, which formed complete camps, full of people and camels.

The sun rose higher and higher on the still unveiled portion of the sky. The hour drew nigh, at which usually

gloomy stillness reigned upon these eminences, for all living creatures sought a shelter in the middle of the city or in clefts. And even now, though there was uncommon animation, yet a certain melancholy shadowed these envirous, where dazzling brightness fell not upon the foliage but upon the gray expanses of rocks. The bustle of distant voices coming from the direction of walls, changed as if into the murmur of waves and seemed to be dissolved in the stillness.

The men who since the morning had been standing in separate groups on Golgotha, in expectation, turned their eyes toward the city, from whence the procession was to start every moment. The litter bearing Antea had already come, preceded by a few soldiers, given by the procurator for the purpose of opening a way in the midst of the throng and to protect her against insults that might be offered by the fanatical mob who hated

foreigners. Alongside the litter was Cinna, accompanied by the centurion Rufilus.

Antea seemed to be quieter and less affrighted at the approaching noon time that meant the announcement of fearful visions which exhausted her life. The procurator's relation about the young Nazarene, had seized upon her mind and averted attention from her own misery; for there was something strange in it that she scarcely could understand. The then world had witnessed many who met their death as indifferently as a funeral pile goes out when the wood is burnt. But it was peace flowing from courage or philosophical submission to the inexorable necessity of the exchange of light into darkness, of real life into some misty, uncertain, indefinite existence. Never till now had man blessed death; none died with unshaken certitude, that not till then, but beyond the funeral pile

or grave begins real existence and happiness so potent and infinite that only an almighty and infinite being can give it.

And the man who was to be crucified proclaimed this as an unquestionable truth. This teaching not only absorbed Antea's attention, but it seemed to her to be the only source of encouragement and hope. She knew she must die and deep regret seized upon her. For what did death mean to her? Forsooth nothing but separation from her Cinna, separation from her father, separation from the world and loves; vacuum, cold semi-nothingness, darkness. Then the more she was happy the greater should be the regret. If the death could be in some way useful or if she could take along with her at least a recollection of the love, at least the memory of happiness, she would the easier muster resignation enough. And when she expected noth-

ing from death she had suddenly heard that it can give to her everything. And who had said it? A strange man, a teacher, a prophet, a philosopher, whose command to men was love, as the highest virtue; who blessed them when beaten, and who was to be crucified. Then Antea thought: Why taught he so, if the cross was the only prize for him? Others thirsted after power—he did not; others thirsted after riches—he remained poor; others thirsted after wastes, palaces, feasts, purple garments, chariots incrusted with mother of pearl and ivory —he lived as a shepherd. Besides he commended love, mercy, poverty, so he could not be so bad as to delude mankind purposely. So then if he said the truth, let death be blessed as the end of life's misery; as an exchange of the worse happiness for the better; as the light for dimmed eyes, and as wings which will help to fly off into everlasting

joy. At last Antea understood what the announced raising from the dead meant.

The mind and the heart of the poor sick woman adhered entirely to this teaching. She had also recollected the words of her father, who many a time repeated that only some new truth might deliver the tortured soul from the darkness and bounds. And just this was the new truth! It defeated death, consequently brought salvation. Antea was so deeply absorbed in these thoughts that for the first time in many days Cinna did not perceive in her face the alarm, which appeared at the drawing nigh of noon.

At last the procession had started from the city towards Golgotha and from the eminence, where Antea stood, it was to be seen perfectly. There was gathered a considerable crowd, which, however, seemed to disappear upon these rocky tracts. More and more people poured

out from the city gate, and on the way joined the crowd of those who waited outside of the walls. At the outset the train of attendants marched in a long line, which, however, by little and little swelled like an overflowed stream. The flanks swarmed with children running to and fro.

The variegated train glittered with the many colors of white mantles of men and blue or red robes of the women. In the midst flashed the Roman soldiers' harnesses and pikes, upon which the sun cast as if flying rays. The hubbub of mingled voices coming from afar little by little became more distinct.

At length they approached and the fore-ranks began to ascend the eminence. Now each one got the start of the other. The mob hurried on in order to occupy better places and to witness the crucifixion more perfectly; and for this reason the guard conducting the condemned

was continually left behind the mob. The children were the first that approached the place of execution. They were mainly boys, tapering, half naked, tied round the hips with rags; with hair cropped except two locks on either side; with almost blue eyes and shrill voices. In the midst of wild cries they began to tear out from the cracks the vapid fragments of rocks for the purpose of throwing them at the crucified. After them ascended the rest of the manifold mob, with which swarmed the eminence. Their faces were flushed from the heat and glowing with desire to witness the spectacle. None bore any trace of pity. Shrillness from all mouths and quickness of motions. All these surprised Antea, although she was already accustimed to talkativeness and the quickness of Greeks in Alexandria. Men talked in such a manner as if they wanted to rush at each other; they called each other as

if for help; and disputing they made as much noise as if they were flayed alive.

Centurion Rufilus having approached the litter explained in a quiet, official tone, while at the same time fresh waves of the people continually flowed from the city. With every minute the throng became larger and larger. In the midst of it were seen clothed in striped mantles the opulent dwellers of Jerusalem, keeping themselves at a distance from the miserable ragamuffins of the suburbs. There came also a great number of country people, whom, with their families, the holy days had allured to the city; the husbandsmen, girded with bags, and shepherds, covered with goat skins, and with surprised and good natured expressions of countenance. The richer burgesses always preferred to stay at home, nevertheless there was plenty of other women. They were mostly of the lower

class as city or country workingwomen or street-walkers even from a distance smelling of nard and dressed in discordant colors; with dyed hair, eyebrows and nails, and wearing large earrings and necklaces of coins.

At length had also arrived the Sanhedrin; amongst its members was Hanaan, an old man with a vulture-like profile, and eyes encircled with bloody lids, and also unwieldly Caiaphas, clad in a cap with two horns, and upon his breast he had a gold plate. Together with them moved various pharisees, viz: pharisees "dragging legs," who intentionally with their feet struck against all obstacles; the pharisees "with bloody foreheads," who also intentionally struck them against the walls; and pharisees "stooped," as if they were ready to take upon their shoulders the whole weight of the sins of Jerusalem. Their overcast gravity and cold fanaticism, singled them from the clamorous mob of the ordinary people.

Cinna looked at this human throng with the cold and contemptuous expression of a man belonging to the dominant race; and Antea looked on with surprise and fear. Many Jews lived in Alexandria, but they were half Hellenes, and here for the first time Antea saw these people as Pilate had depicted them, and as they really were in their own nest. Her young face, upon which death had already imprinted its stamp, and her shadow-like figure attracted general attention. The public gazed at her importunately as much as the soldiers surrounding her litter would permit; so great here was the contempt and hate for every foreigner that there was no eye in which was visible a sympathy for her, but through them all rather shone satisfaction that the victim of approaching death should not escape her destination. Now at last Antea thoroughly understood the reason why these people cried

for a cross for the prophet who taught love. And now this Nazarene suddenly appeared in her eyes as one near to her heart, as one almost dear. He must die and she also. After the passed sentence nothing could save him, and she also had received sentence—so it seemed to her that they both were united in a brotherhood of misery and death. But he went upon the cross, with a belief in the hereafter, and she, till now, had no such a faith and she came here to derive it from his sight.

In the meantime aloof the air rang with clamor, whistle, howl—then all was hushed. Now was heard a rattle of armor and the heavy steps of the legionaries. Now there was a stir amid the crowd which fell aside to make room for the body of soldiers, leading the procession which had begun to pass the litter. All around the condemned marched the guard, slowly with a regular step. In

its midst above their heads were seen three bars of the crosses, which seemed to move by themselves, for the men who bore them bent beneath the burdens. It was easy to guess that among these three was not the Nazarene, for two of them had impudent countenances and the third one was advanced in years, an ordinary rustic, whom evidently the soldiers compelled to stand in the stead of him. The Nazarene walked behind the crosses under the guard of two soldiers. He walked covered with a purple mantle and wreathed with a crown of thorns, and from under its pricks appeared drops of blood. Some ran slowly down his face, others settled right near the crown and appeared like haws or beads of coral. He was pale; advanced slowly, with tottering, uncertain, weak steps. Amid the derision of the mob he walked, apparently absorbed in an unearthly contemplation as if he had already been abstracted

from this world; and as if unheeding the cries of hatred or as if he was superhumanly merciful and forgave them, and seemed to be already wrapped with the air of infinity; and already elevated above human gold, he was very quiet, and sweet but sorrowful with the boundlessness of the sorrow of the whole world.

"Thou art the truth!" whispered Antea with trembling lips.

The train just now passed the litter. There was even a moment that it stopped when the vanguard cleared the way. Now Antea saw the Nazarene, being only a few steps away; she saw his locks moved by the breeze; she saw the purple reflection of his mantle cast upon his pale, translucent face. The mob eagerly thronging toward him surrounded the soldiers in a narrow semicircle and pressed them so much that in order to guard him against the fury of the fanatics they were obliged to form a barrier of

their spears. Everywhere were seen the outstretched arms with clenched fists, eyes protruding from their orbits, white teeth, beards dispersed by furious motions, and foaming lips, vomiting harsh outcries. In the meantime he, having looked around (as if pretending to ask: "What did I to you?"), lifted his eyes to heaven and prayed for them and forgave them.

At this moment Cinna exclaimed:

"Antea! Antea!"

But Antea seemed not to hear this exclamation. From her eyes flowed big tears; she forgot about her sickness, she forgot that for many days she had not risen from her litter—and now having suddenly risen and trembling, half conscienceless from the grief, pity and indignation at the fanatical outcries of the mob, she commenced to catch hold of the hyacinths and apple blossoms and to cast them right under the feet of the Nazarene.

There was silence for a moment. The mob seemed to be seized by astonishment at the sight of this eminent Roman lady who adored a condemned man. He turned his eyes upon her poor, sick face and his lips began to move as if he blessed her. Antea again dropped upon the pillows of her litter and she felt flow upon her a sea of light, goodness, mercy, confidence, hope, and happiness, and she whispered again:

"Thou art the truth!"

And again burst into tears.

But the Nazarene was pushed forward a couple of score of paces from the litter towards the place where were struck up the poles of the crosses, driven into a cleft. He again vanished out of her sight in the midst of the mob; but because that place was considerably elevated then Antea soon again perceived his face and crown of thorns. The legionaries once more, with sticks, charged the mob and

drove it back far enough to obstruct not in the execution. They then began to fasten the two malefactors to the crosses on either hand. The third one stood in the middle, bearing a white chart fastened with a nail to the top, and which was raised and tugged by the wind growing stronger and stronger. When the soldiers at length approached the Nazarene and began to strip off his clothes, then in the midst of the mob thundered the cries: "King! King! yield not! King! where are thy hosts? Defend thyself!" From time to time the mob burst into laughter, which at length became so frenzied that suddenly the whole rocky eminence resounded with but one exulting chuckle. In the meantime the soldiers stretched the Nazarene on his back upon the ground in order to nail his hand to the bar of the cross and after to draw him up together with the bar, on the main pole.

Suddenly near Antea's litter a man dressed in a white simara threw himself on the ground and having strewn his head with dust and gravel began to cry with a desperate, heart-breaking voice:

"I was a leper; he made me whole—and yet they crucify him."

Antea's face became as white as linen.

"He made him whole! Do you hear, Caius?" said she.

"Do you want to go back?" asked Cinna.

"No! I will stay here!"

And now a wild, boundless despair seized like a hurricane upon Cinna, for he had not called the Nazarene to heal Antea.

At this instant the soldiers began to drive the nails. There was heard the dull clank of iron striking against iron; but soon the clank became louder and sharper when the points of the nails, having penetrated the flesh, reached the wood.

The mob became silent again, probably in order to rejoice at the groans, which the torture might extort from the lips of the Nazarene. But he remained silent and the air upon the eminence rang with but the ominous, awful sound of the strokes of the hammers.

At last the work was finished and then the bar, together with the body, was pulled up the pole. A centurion, superintending the work, pronounced or rather monotonously sung the words of command and now, according to his order, one of the soldiers began to nail the feet.

In the meantime the clouds veiled the sun; and the distant hills and rocks, which, till now, had shone with reflected rays, became undistinguishable. The earth became dark. Ominous bronze-colored dusk had seized upon the environs, and became thicker and thicker as the sun sank deeper behind the volumes of clouds. One might say that some be-

ing from above was casting upon the earth, the reddish darkness. A hot hurricane gave a howl once, twice, and then mitigated. The air became sultry.

Suddenly even the ruddy remnant of the light became black. The clouds, dull as night, began to roll like a gigantic wave and moved towards the eminence and the city. The storm was coming. The world was full of uneasiness, restlessness.

"Let us go back," said Cinna again.

"I wish to look at him still more, more," replied Antea.

As the darkness veiled the hanging bodies Cinna caused the litter to be carried nearer the place of torture. And they approached so near that they were separated but by a few paces from the cross. On the black ground of wood was seen the body of the crucified, which in this general obscuration, appeared to be as if it was woven of the silver rays of

the moon. His breast moved quickly by the breath. Still he kept his head and eyes turned upward.

In this moment was heard a hollow muttering in the depth of the clouds. The thunder awoke, arose, and with horrible rattle, rolled from the East toward the West; and then as if pitching into bottomless abysses, murmured lower and lower, or hushed or again grew stronger, and at last roared so terribly that the whole earth shook to its foundation.

At the same time a livid gigantic lightning ripped the clouds, and illuminated the sky, the earth, the crosses, the armor of the soldiers, and the uneasy, frightened mob massed as a flock of sheep.

As soon as the lightning was over the deeper darkness veiled. Not far from the litter were heard sobs of some women who had also approached the cross: In these laments amidst the stillness was

something overaweing. Those who lost their way amidst the crowd now began to call each other. Here and there echoed frightened voices.

"Ojah! ojlanu! is not the just crucified?"

"Who gave evidence to the truth? Ojah!"

And another cried:

"Woe thee! Jerusalem!"

And another again:

"The earth trembled."

Then the second lightning unveiled the depth of heaven and there were seen as if fiery gigantic figures. The voices ceased or rather vanished in the howls of the hurricane which again started to blow with enormous force, and blew off many linen and mantles and began to fling them over the eminence.

Then again were heard voices:

"The earth trembled!"

Some began to run; others being

chained to the spot by terror stood motionless, amazed, thoughtless, with but this obscure impression that something terrible had happened.

Meanwhile the darkness began to be red. The wind still rolled the clouds, pushed and tore them, but the light gradually increased and at length the dark firmament tore asunder and suddenly through the crevice, poured in a stream the beams of the sun and illuminated the eminence, the frightened human faces, and the crosses.

The Nazarene's head, as colorless as if it was of wax, had fallen on his breast; his eyes were closed, and his lips pale.

"He has expired," whispered Antea.

"He has expired," repeated Cinna.

At this instant the centurion pointed his spear to the side of the dead. It was wonderful that return of light and the sight of this death seemed to quiet the mob. Now they came nearer and nearer,

so much the more that the soldiers did not deny them admittance. Amidst the rabble raised voices:

"Come down from the cross! Descend from the cross!"

Antea once more cast her eyes upon this pale, hung head and whispered as if to herself:

"Will he rise from the dead?"

Before the death, putting its blue stigma to his eyes and lips; before these extremely outstretched arms, and before this motionless body, which already swagged with the weight of lifeless things—her voice vibrated with desperate hopelessness.

With no less power, the affliction teased Cinna's soul. He also doubted as to the Nazarene's rising from the dead; but he also believed that only he, if alive, could make Antea whole, by dint of his bad or good power.

All the while more and more voices were heard.

"Descend from the cross! Descend from the cross!"

"Descend!" Cinna repeated with inward despair, "cure her for me and take my soul instead."

In the meantime it became clearer and clearer. The hills were still in mist, but above Golgotha and the city the sky was already serene. "Turis Antonia" glistened in the sun's light, and shone by itself as if it was also a sun. The air became fresh and full of swallows. Cinna commanded to return.

It was afternoon. Nearby the house Antea said suddenly:

"Hecate did not come to-day."

Cinna also thought of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Next day the spectre did not appear. The sick woman was unusually alive, for Tymon arrived from Cesarea. He was anxious for his daughter's life, and being alarmed by Cinna's letters he, a few days before, left Alexandria to see his only child once more before her death.

Again hope began to knock at Cinna's heart as if demanding to be let in. But he had no courage to open the door to this visitor; he dared not hope. Why, Antea's visions were also interrupted before, though never for two days in succession, yet diurnal intermissions happened in Alexandria, and in the wilds. This relaxation Cinna credited to Tymon's arrival and to the impressions experienced under the cross, with which her mind was so filled that even with her

father she could not speak about anything else. Tymon also, with great interest, listened to her. He did not deny but contemplated and carefully inquired into the Nazarene's principles, about which, however, Antea knew no more than that which was told her by the procurator.

Now she felt better and somewhat strengthened and when noontime passed in her eye was visible true hope. Several times she called this day a fortunate one, and asked her husband to register it. But in fact the day was dull and melancholy. The whole sky was uniformly veiled with low clouds; and it was raining from morning till late afternoon, when the sky cleared and the large fiery sun's globe appeared from the mist and painted with gold and purple the clouds, the gray rocks, and the white marbles of the porticos of the villa and then, amidst the enormous glares, set towards the Mediterranean sea.

Next morning the weather became admirable; it was fresh, the sky was without any spot and the earth was so deeply plunged into the azure bath that everything seemed to be blue. The day promised to be a scorching one. Antea caused her litter to be carried out under the favorite pistachia, in order to enjoy the cheerful, blue perspective, which was displayed from the eminence, where the tree stood. Cinna and Tymon even for one moment did not leave the litter and earnestly observed the face of the invalid, in which was now visible some restless expectation, but without that deadly fear, which formerly seized upon her befor every noon. Now her eyes were brighter and her cheeks became slightly red. Momentarily Cinna already thought that Antea could be whole again and he had a great mind to throw himself upon the ground and to sob from joy and to bless the gods; and again he was

seized by fear that it was perhaps only the last flash of an extinguishing lamp. Being anxious to support his weak hope, anyhow, he ever and anon looked at Tymon; but very likely similar thoughts had passed also through Tymon's mind, for he evidently avoided his sight.

None of the three mentioned that the noon was coming near; but Cinna every moment restlessly cast his eyes upon the shadow and with palpitating heart noticed that it became shorter and shorter.

And so they sat, being deeply plunged in the muse. Perhaps Antea was perturbed the least. Laying in the open litter and resting her head upon a purple pillow she joyfully breathed the pure air which the westward breeze brought from the distant sea. But before noon even this breeze ceased to blow and it became warmer and warmer. The shrubs of nard and the rocks, heated by the sun, began to cast a strong, intoxicating odor.

Over the small tufts of anemones swung the bright butterflies. The small lizards growing accustomed to this litter and these men, as usually, one after another confidently but warily crawled out from the clefts of rocks. The whole of nature was pacified in the luminous tranquillity, in the warmth, in the mild sweetness and the azure sleepiness.

Tymon and Cinna seemed also to be sunken in this sunny peace. The invalid closed her eyes as if she could not help sleeping, so silence was interrupted by nothing but the sighs, which sometimes raised her bosom.

Meanwhile Cinna observed that his shadow already lost its longitudinal shape and lay right at his feet.

It was noon.

Suddenly Antea opened her eyes and said with a strange voice:

"Cinna, give me your hand."

He arose abruptly, and fear chilled the

blood in his veins, for it was coming time for the fearful visions.

And she opened her eyes more and more.

"Do you see," said she, "how a light gathers over there and how it binds itself up into a sheaf, how it vibrates in the air, glitters and advances toward me?"

"Antea! look not over there," exclaimed Cinna.

But—wonder! there was no awe on her visage. Her mouth slightly opened, her eyes more and more wide, and some immeasurable joy radiated her countenance.

"The pillar of light comes nearer toward me," continued she, "I behold! It is he! the Nazarene! He smiles! O sweet! O merciful! As a mother he stretches out his pierced hands towards me! Cinna! he brings me health and salvation and calls me unto him."

And Cinna grew very pale and said:

"Wheresoever he calls us, let us follow him."

A while after, on the stony path in the direction of the city, appeared Pontius Pilate. Before he came nearer it was seen from his countenance that he brings some news, which, however, as a sensible man, he considers as a new and strange invention of the credulous and ignorant mob. So being yet aloof and wiping the sweat from his forehead, he started to call:

"Imagine, what they now blab—that he has risen from the dead!"

THE END.

BE BLESSED

An Idyll

BE BLESSED.

One fine moonlight night the wise and great Krishna was plunged deep in contemplation, and then he said:

"I thought man the most magnificent creation in the world; but I find I have been mistaken. Here I see a flower of lotus, swinging in the night breeze. How much more beautiful it is than all living beings! Its leaves are just opened for the silver moonlight; I cannot turn my sight from it. Surely nothing like it exists among men," he repeated with a sigh.

And after a while he thought again:

"Why should not I, the god, create with the might of a word, a being, who would be among men as the lotus is

among flowers? Then let it be so: for the joy of mankind and the earth."

"Lotus! change yourself into a living virgin and appear before me!"

Very slight trembled the water as if being touched by a swallow's wing. The moon shone more silvery, the night became brighter, the night thrush sang still more and then ceased. And the miracle was done. Before Krishna stood lotus in a human form. Even the god himself was amazed.

"You were the flower of the lake," said he, "be henceforth the flower of my thought, and begin to speak!"

And the virgin started to speak in a low voice, as murmur white lotus's leaves when kissed by a breath of a summer breeze—

"Master! you have metamorphosed me into a living being, where now command you me to dwell? Remember, Master, that while a flower, I trembled and

closed my leaves, when touched by the slightest breath of wind. I feared, oh, Master, showers and storms; I feared the lightnings and thunders; and I feared even the burning sunbeams. And as you commanded me to be the incarnation of lotus, so I preserved my character and now, therefore, I fear, oh, Master, the earth and everything that exists upon it. Where then command you me to dwell?"

Krishna lifted his wise eyes towards the stars, he thought for a while, and then asked:

"Do you wish to live on tops of mountains?"

"There, are snow and cold, oh, Master! I fear."

"And then * * * * I will build for you a crystal palace upon the bottom of a lake."

"In the depth of waters live snakes and other monsters. I fear, oh, Master."

"Do you wish to live on the boundless prairies?"

"Oh, Master! the winds and storms, like wild herds, trample the prairies."

"What will I do with you, the incarnate flower? Ha, in Ellora's caves, there live saintly anchorites. Do you wish to live in a cave apart from the world?"

"There, is dark, oh, Master, I fear."

Krishna sat on a stone and leaned his head upon his hand. The virgin stood before him, frightened and trembling.

Meanwhile, Aurora began to illuminate the sky in the East, and gilded the lake, the palms, and the bamboos. There were heard upon the waters, choirs of rosy herons, blue cranes, or white swans; and in the woods, peacocks and bengals —and suddenly, in accompaniment, the air rang with sounds of strings stretched upon a pearl shell, and the words of human song.

Krishna awoke from his musing and said:

"'Tis the poet Walmiki, who salutes the rising sun."

A while after, the purple curtain, covering lichens, fell aside, and on the bank of the lake, Walmiki appeared.

Having beheld the incarnate lotus, Walmiki ceased to play. His pearl shell dropped from his grasp and fell upon the ground, and his hands drooped to his sides, and he stood speechless, as if transformed by the great Krishna, into a tree.

The god, delighted with his new creation, said:

"Awake, Walmiki, and say."

And Walmiki said:

"I love!"

He remembered only this one word and therefore only this one could he utter.

Suddenly Krishna's face irradiated.

"Adorable girl, at last I have found upon the earth a worthy place for you. Live in the poet's heart."

And Walmiki repeated again:

* * * * * I love!

The will of the potent Krishua, the will of a god began to push the girl toward the heart of the poet. Walmiki's heart had also been made translucent as crystal.

Serene as a summer day, quiet as the Gangees' waters the girl entered the abode designed for her. But suddenly, when she looked into the bottom of Walmiki's heart her face became pale, and a fear came over her as a cold wind. And Krishna was surprised.

"Incarnate flower," asked he, "do you fear also a poet's heart?"

"Oh, Master," answered the girl, "where did you command me to live? Here, in this one heart alone; I beheld snowy mountain tops and depths of waters full of strange creatures, and a prairie with its winds and storms, and the dark Ellora's caves—and then again, I fear, oh, Master!"

But good and wise Krishna said:

"Fear not, you, the incarnate flower. If in Walmiki's heart, lay snowy expanses, be warm spring's breath, which will melt it; if there is depth of water, be a pearl in this depth; if there is a deserted prairie, scatter there the seed of the flowers of happiness; if there are dark Ellora's caves, be in the darkness a ray of sunlight."

And Walmiki, who, during these words had recovered his speech, added:

"And be blessed!"

BARTEK THE CONQUEROR

A Tale of the Franco-Prussian War

Translated from the Polish by
IZA YOUNG
(*The Translator of "Without Dogma"*)

BARTEK THE CONQUEROR.

CHAPTER I.

My hero's name is Bartek Slovik, called Goggle Eyes by the villagers because of his large protruding orbs which always seemed to look astonished and wonderingly at everything and everybody. His intellectual faculties were far from being brilliant, hence the other name of Foolish Bartek, by which he was last known and will most probably live in history.

Bartek lived in the village of Pognenbin, in Prussian Poland, where he owned a cabin, some fields, two cows, a piebald horse, and an excellent wife,

called Magda. Through bad and good years they lived contentedly enough, taking things as the Lord sent them; but when, among other things, the Lord sent war, Bartek became terribly frightened. Marching orders had arrived and he had to leave house and fields to the care of a woman. The peasants in Pognenbin were nearly all poor. During the winter months Bartek had earned a little money by working at the mill. What would become of them supposing the war lasted some time?

Magda on receiving the news broke into torrents of abuse and lamentations, calling upon the saints to witness her distress. "You are but a foolish lad, Bartek, but I am sorry for you; the French will never let you escape with whole limbs, most likely will chop your head off."

Bartek felt the justice of the remark, and nodded mournfully. He was hor-

ribly afraid of the French, and sorry for them too. They had done him no harm, why should he go and fight them. While living in his own village things had often seemed hard, but when it came to the point of leaving it he felt that nowhere else could he live so contentedly; but there was no help for it, it was fate, he had to go.

He kissed his wife and his ten year old son Frank, crossed himself devoutly, and left the cabin, Magda following him. The leave-taking was not outwardly a tender one. The woman and the child, sobbed loudly, and he repeated: "Be quiet now, hush," and then they found themselves on the road. Here they became aware that everywhere in Pognenbin the same thing occurred as had happened with them. The whole village had come forth: the road swarmed with men called to the war. They were marching along in procession

towards the railway station, followed by women, old men, children, and dogs. In the main they looked sad and troubled; some of the younger men had pipes between their lips, a few were drunk, some were singing the song about General Skrsynitzki and a few German settlers sang in quavering tones the "Wacht am Rhein." The whole motley crowd among which here and there glittered the gendarmes' bayonets, filed along the hedges with great noise, clamor and confusion. The women twined their arms round their "soldier boys" necks, lamenting loudly. An old crone, with a protruding, yellow tooth shook her fist at some invisible enemy. Another cursed loudly: "May the Lord pay you back for all our tears and sorrows!" Cries of "Good bye, Joseph; Good bye, Poitek!" sounded everywhere. Dogs are barking. The church bell is tolling mournfully. The parish

priest himself is saying the prayers for the dying, for many of those on their way to the station will never return. The war claims them; but the war will not send them back to their homes again. The ploughs will rust in the fields because the village has declared war against France. Pognenbin could not look quietly at the supremacy of France and took umbrage at the Spanish Succession. The sound of the tolling bell accompanies the crowd which now emerge beyond the village.

They are passing the cross; in the twinkling of an eye all caps and helmets are taken off. A golden dust rises from the ground for the day is fine and dry. On both sides of the road the ripening corn is waving and bending their heavy ears under the gentle breeze. The larks are singing overhead, under the blue vault of heaven.

The station! More crowds arrive from

half a dozen Polish villages. There is great bustle, noise and confusion. Huge placards cover the walls. They say: "In the name of God and the Fatherland" The Landwehr is going out in defense of their threatened homes and families. France has evidently sworn the destruction of these half dozen villages, so at least seem to think those who are reading the proclamations. More crowds are coming to the station. The waiting-room is dark with tobacco smoke, which veils the placards. It is difficult to understand each other in the general hubbub of voices, shouts and clatter. Above the din and confusion the word of command becomes audible and its hard words sound crisp and decisive.

The bell rings; there is a whistle, and the panting of the engine is heard from a distance. It draws nearer and nearer, as if it were the war itself coming to take them.

The second bell; a tremor runs through all the breasts. A woman's shrill voice is calling for her husband. Somebody misunderstands her words and calls out: the French are coming, and a great panic ensues, not only among the women, but also among the future heroes of Sedan The crowd seems to shake to and fro with emotion. In the meanwhile the train stops at the station. Through the carriage windows innumerable uniform caps appear. They move inside and swarm as in a beehive. Further on, the trucks display gloomy looking cannons, the open carriages are bristling with bayonets. The soldiers were evidently told to sing, because the whole train seems to quiver under the powerful masculine voices. A strange force seems to emanate from the train, where it will tend to is not easy to foresee.

On the platform the recruits begin to

form into squares; those who have a minute to spare say good bye. Bartek waves his long arms like the wings of a windmill while his eyes are almost starting from their sockets.

"Magda! good bye!"

"Oh, my poor laddie."

"You will never see me any more!"

"No, I shall never see you again!"

"Well, there is no help for it!"

"The mother of God shield and protect you!"

"Good bye! Take care of the house."

The woman put her arm around his neck sobbing.

"God speed you."

The last moment has arrived. The wailing, moans, and sobs of the women drown all other sounds. "Good bye! God speed you!" Now the soldiers are separated from the seething crowd. They form a black compact mass divided into squares which begin to move

with the precision and regularity of a machine. The word of command is given; the squares break up in the middle and draw themselves out into a long line towards the carriages into which they quietly vanish. At the far end the engine shrieks and throws out volumes of grey smoke. The wailing of the women has now reached its climax. Some have thrown their aprons over their heads, others are stretching their arms towards the carriages. Sobbing voices are calling out the names of their husbands and sons.

"Good bye, Bartek!" calls out Magda, from below. "And don't you go where nobody sends you. The mother of God protect you. Good bye! Oh, God have mercy on us!"

"Take care of the house," shouts Bartek.

The long line of carriages give a sudden start, clank against each other, and begin to move slowly.

"Remember your wife and child," calls out Magda, tripping after the train. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Good bye!"

The train goes faster and faster carrying away the warriors from Pognenbin, and the adjacent villages.

CHAPTER II.

Magda, together with the crowd of sorrowing women goes in one direction, while the train bristling with bayonets, and Bartek within, moves further and further into the grey distance to which there seems no end. Pognenbin has now become invisible. Only the huge lime tree is still visible and the church steeple gilded with the sunlight. Presently the *lime tree* dissolves itself and the gilded cross on the steeple looks like a luminous point. As long as that point remained visible, Bartek looked at it, but when it disappeared at last, he feels sick and faint and gives himself up altogether. Involuntarily his eyes turn towards the sergeant who sits opposite, holding his musket between his

knees, and smoking his pipe. Beside God, he is now the only one he can look up to. His future life is now the sergeant's business, Bartek does not know or understand anything about it. Other eyes than his travel in the same direction. In Pognenbin or the other villages every one of them is more or less his own master and has to think for himself, now it is the sergeant who has to think for them all. He bids them turn to the right, to the left, to stand still, or to march and they obey him blindly. They ask him with their eyes what will become of them. He himself knows as much as they do and would be glad if any of his superiors would enlighten him. The peasants are afraid to question otherwise but with their eyes, because it is war and martial laws are in vigor. They do not know what is permitted and what prohibited; do not know anything about it, but the very

mention of "Kiregsgericht," makes them tremble. The sergeant looks grave and thoughtful, the musket seems to weigh heavily on his knees, he throws it across to Bartek. The latter grasps it convulsively, draws a deep breath and looks intently at his superior; but derives little comfort from that.

Heigho! things must be bad, the sergeant looks so gloomy. At the stations the sergeant pulls himself together, and gives the word of command even in a louder tone than usual, to show himself before the authorities; but as soon as the train starts again he subsides into a brown study. For him the world has now two sides: one is clear and easily understood; that is, his own room, his wife, and his feather bed; the other is dark, altogether dark; it is France and the war. His ardor like that of the whole army would like to take a crablike march.

The train in the meanwhile goes on panting and snorting. At every station new carriages and engines are hooked on, nothing is visible but helmets, bayonets, horses, and Uhlan's lancers.

The bright day is followed by a balmy evening. The sun is sinking behind a blood-red sky and myriads of silvery clouds lined with black towards the West are floating high above in the space. The train has stopped taking on men and carriages at the stations and goes on shaking and panting towards those fiery clouds that look like blood. From the open carriage in which sits Bartek, with the people from Pognenbin, he sees, whirling past him villages, towns, and farmsteads. He watches the storks standing gravely on one leg near their nests. Everything seems to whirl past him and everything is red. The soldiers whisper among themselves noticing that the sergeant, his knapsack under his

head and a pipe between his lips is fast asleep.

Voïtek Gvizdala, a peasant from Pognenbin, sitting near Bartek, pulls him by the sleeve.

"I say, Bartek!"

Bartek turned towards him his thoughtful face and staring eyes.

"Why do you look like a calf led to slaughter?" whispered Voïtek, "but to be sure, poor fellow, that's where you are going."

"Ah! ah!" moaned Bartek.

"Are you afraid?" asked Voïtek.

"Who would not be afraid?"

The clouds had deepened in color. Gvizdala stretched his arm out and whispered again:

"You see that red glow in the sky? Do you know foolish Bartek what that is? It is blood. Here is Poland—our country as it were—you understand?

And there, far away, where the red clouds are spreading, that is France."

"Shall we be there soon?"

"Are you in a hurry? They say it is a terrible long way off; but never mind, the French will come and meet you halfway."

Bartek seems to ponder over a difficult problem. A few minutes later he asks:

"Voïtek!"

"Well?"

"What kind of people are the French?"

Here the scholarly Voïtek perceived a sudden precipice into which he might plunge head-formost but could not easily scramble up again. He knew the French were French. He had heard something about them from old people, who said, that they always beat everybody; lastly he knew they were foreigners, but it was not easy to explain this to Bartek. To give himself time, he repeated the question:

"What kind of people?"

Three different nations were known to Voïtek. First there was his own, the Poles in the middle; on one side of these were the Muscovites, and on the other the Germans. But he knew there existed various kinds of Germans. Striving for clearness rather than accuracy, he said:

"What kind of people are the French? How can I tell you? Unless they be a kind of Germans, a worse kind."

"The devil," exclaimed Bartek.

Up to now he had experienced only one feeling in connection with the French and that was fear. Now this Prussian Landwehrmann begins to feel a patriotic aversion towards them. Yet he has not grasped the question thoroughly and therefore asks again:

"Then Germans will fight against Germans?"

Here Voïtek, like another Socrates, meets him with a parable:

"Does not your dog Lysek fight with my Burek?"

Bartek stared at the teacher:

"That is true!"

"The Austrians are Germans also and our soldiers fought against them. Old Swiertch told me that General Steinmetz called out to them: "Forward boys! Down upon the Germans!" but with the Frenchmen it will not be quite so easy. The French have had the best of it in every war yet. If once they get hold of you there is no getting out of their clutches. They are twice or three times as big as you and have long beards like the Jews. Some of them are black like devils. When you meet those recommend your soul to the Lord."

"Then why are we going there?" asks Bartek in desperation.

This philosophic remark was not so foolish as it seemed to Voïtek, who under the influence of official inspiration, hastened with a reply:

"I should myself prefer not to go; but if we do not go to them, they would come to us. Have you not read what was written about it? They seem to have a special grudge against us peasants and want our land, maybe in order to smuggle over spirits from Russian Poland. The government will not let them, and declared war. Do you understand?"

"Ah! Why should I not understand?" says Bartek resignedly.

"Besides that," continued Voïtek, "they have an eye upon our womenkind."

"Would they not leave even Magda in peace?"

"Indeed, and they would not let even the old women alone!"

"Oh!" shouted Bartek, with an intonation as if he wished to say: "if that be the case I shall go for them."

It seems to him that this is too much.

They might smuggle spirits across for anything he cared, but he would not let them come near his Magda. He began to look upon the war from an altogether different point of view, and gather courage at the thought that so many cannons and soldiers were going in protection of their wives. He clenched his fists vigorously and his dread of the French became mixed up with a strange hatred towards them. He came to the conclusion that there was nothing left but to go for them.

In the meanwhile the light in the sky had faded. It became dark. The carriages upon the uneven rails began to shake and the pickelhauben and bayonets were swaying to and fro as if beating time. An hour passed, then another. The engines emitted millions of fiery sparks, which like golden streaks and serpents shot across each other in the darkness. Bartek could not sleep.

Ideas like those fiery sparks whirled and shot across his brain; about Magda, Pognenbin, the French and the Germans. It seemed to him as if he could not move from his seat if he tried ever so much. Then he had visions: He saw his dog fighting with Voïtek's dog till they made the hair fly. He grasped his stick to separate them, when lo! he saw a Frenchman, as black as soot, sitting near his Magda and she laughing with him, showing all her white teeth. Other Frenchmen were mocking Bartek pointing their fingers at him. It was perhaps the carriage rumbling but it seemed to him that he heard them calling distinctly: "Magda! Magda!" Bartek shouted: "Stop that, you thieves! and let the woman be." And they still kept on calling: "Magda! Magda!" The dogs were barking and the whole village called out to him: "Stand up for your wife, Bartek." Was he tied down or

what? No! he jumped up, the cords broke asunder, he grasped the Frenchman by the head, and then . . .

He was roused by a stinging blow in the face. He woke and jumped up. The whole carriage was awake, everybody asks what is the matter? Poor Bartek had grasped the sergeant by the beard in his dream. Now he is standing up, straight like an arrow, with his fingers to his temple and the sergeant waves his arms and shouts like mad:

"Dummes Vieh aus der Polakei! Hau' ich den Lümmel in die Fresse, das ihm die Zähne sectionenweise aus dem Munde herausfliegen werden! [You stupid Polish beast! I will cut the lubber in the jaw so that his teeth will fly out of his mouth one after the other]."

The sergeant becomes almost hoarse with fury and Bartek stands humbly with his hand to his temples. Other soldiers bite their lips to prevent their

laughing; finally the sergeant emits the last parting shots: "Ein polnischer Ochse! Ochse aus Podolien! [Polish ox; ox from Podolia!]" then everything becomes quiet again. Bartek sits down on his former place, he feels his face swelling, and the engine repeats continually:

"Magda! Magda! Magda!"

And his heart somehow feels very sore.

CHAPTER III.

It is morning! The pale light of dawn falls upon sleepy, tired faces. The soldiers sleep on the benches as well as they can; some with their heads hanging down, others with their heads thrown back. The sun rises and throws a rosy light all over the earth. The air is fresh and keen. They wake up one by one and their still half-open eyes see a strange country rising out from the mist. Heigho! where is now Pognenbin and the neighboring villages?

The hills around are covered with oak trees; black and white houses with red tiled roofs are dotted about in the valley below, beautiful houses adorned with trailing vines. Here and there the pointed church-steeples rise above the

houses and tall factory chimneys crowned with tufts of rosy smoke. But there is a feeling of narrowness about the landscape, no huge, waving corn fields anywhere; instead of that, people swarm about like bees near their hives. The train makes few stops now and rumbles past a great many stations. Something unusual must have happened because crowds of people seem to be standing together everywhere. The sun shone now from behind the hills, one or two of the lads begin to say aloud their morning prayers; others follow their example and the first rays of the sun falls on the honest peasants' faces absorbed in their devotion.

The train stops now at a central station. A crowd of people gather round them; they have news from the seat of war.

A victory! a victory! The despatches have come some hours ago. All were

expecting a defeat and when the good news arrived their joy knew no bounds. People half dressed, left their beds and houses and rushed towards the station. From some of the roofs flags are waving and in all hands handkerchiefs. They carry beer, tobacco, and cigars to the carriages. The enthusiasm is undescribable. Their faces are radiant.

The "Wacht am Rhein," bursts forth like thunder. Some are sobbing wildly, others embrace their nearest neighbors. "Our Fritz has beaten them! They have taken standards and cannons." Under the impulse of a noble enthusiasm they give everything they have about them to the soldiers.

The soldiers are carried away by the general enthusiasm, their hearts fill with courage, they also begin to sing. The carriages again throb with the sound of strong manly voices, and the crowd listens wonderingly to the strange melo-

dies and unintelligible words. "Die Polen! die Polen!" repeat the multitude, and throng round the carriages admiring the stalwart figures, and telling each other anecdotes about the terrible courage of these Polish regiments.

Bartek's face is much swollen on one side, which together with his protruding eyes, yellow moustaches, and tall bony figure gives him a terrible appearance. They look at him as if he were some strange animal. These are the defenders of Germany! They will show the French what they can do!

Bartek smiles complacently, because he is glad too that the French have been defeated. They will not come now to molest his wife or take away his land. He smiles but his face is painful, so he contorts his features at the same time and looks truly awful. He eats like one of Homer's heroes. Pea-sausage and tankards of beer disappear down his

capacious throat as if within a precipice. They give him cigars and pence; he takes everything.

"They are not a bad sort, these Germans," he says to Voïtek, "and you see, they have beaten the French."

But the sceptic Voïtek throws cold water on his ardor.

Voïtek becomes prophetic like Cassandra.

"The French always give way at first, so as to throw dust in their enemies' eyes, but afterwards, they make the splinters fly."

Voïtek does not know that his opinion is shared by the greater part of Europe or that he and Europe are utterly wrong.

They are moving again. All the houses so far as the eye can see are covered with flags. At some of the stations they stop a little longer in order to let other trains pass. Soldiers from all parts of Germany are hastening to

reinforce the victorious brethren. The trains are covered with green boughs and garlands. Upon their lances the Uhlans carry bunches of flowers; the gift of patriotic women. Among the Uhlans, too, the greater portion are Poles. Snatches of conversation and greetings pass from carriage to carriage:

"How goes it boys? Where are you bound for?"

Sometimes a popular Polish song strikes their ear from a passing train, and Bartek and his companions join in the chorus.

They were dejected when leaving Pognenbin. They are now full of spirit and enthusiasm. A train arriving from France with the first batch of wounded somewhat damps their ardor. They stop at Deutz several hours till the other trains have crossed the bridge to Cologne. Bartek, with some of his comrades, went to see the sick and

wounded. Some are lying in covered carriages, others in open trucks so that they can be easily seen. At the first sight of them Bartek's courage goes down into his boots.

"Come along Voïtek," he exclaims, "look how many people the French have spoiled." It is a terrrible sight, all these pale and tired faces, some of them begrimed with blood and smoke and contorted with pain. To the general outburst of joy they reply with moans. Some curse the war, curse both the French and Germans. Their lips are black and feverish and they call out for water; their eyes have a wandering, haggard look. Here and there among the wounded are a few with the seal of death upon their countenances; some look peaceful, as if they were at rest, others have their faces distorted convulsively.

Bartek sees for the first time the

terrible fruits of war. In his head dire confusion again prevails; he looks on open-mouthed and dazed; people jostle him from all sides, a gendarme hits him with the butt of his musket. His eyes are going in search of Voïtek, he finds him, and exclaims:

"Voïtek! God in heaven! oh!"

"It will be the same with you."

"Mother of God! How can people murder each other? Why with us, when one peasant wallops the other, the gendarme takes him up and puts him into prison!"

"It is different now and he who damages most people has the best of it. Foolish Bartek! did you think that you were going to blaze away with powder, or shoot at the mark as on the Posen manoeuvres?"

There evidently was a world wide difference between theory and practice. Our Bartek was a soldier who did his

duty at manoeuvres and review. He knew that war meant killing each other, yet when he saw the blood of the wounded and the whole misery of war he felt sick and faint and could scarcely keep steady on his feet. His respect for the French returned until they crossed the bridge from Deutz to Cologne. Here in the central station they saw the first prisoners of war. They were surrounded by soldiers and crowds of citizens who looked at them with pride, but as yet without ill-feeling. Bartek pushed his way through the crowd with his elbows, looked at the carriages, and became rooted to the spot with astonishment.

A troop of French Infantry, mostly small and wretched looking men in tattered cloaks filled the carriage to overflowing.

Many of them stretched out their hands to receive small donatoins from

the people around when the soldiers did not interfere.

Bartek from what he had heard from his comrade had formed quite different ideas about the French. His courage crept out of his boots into its proper place. He turned round to see whether Voïtek was within hail. Voïtek stood close to him:

"What did you tell me? Why they are nothing to look at. If I knocked one on the head four of them would tumble down."

"They must have shrunk in the war," said Voïtek, wonderingly.

"What gibberish are they talking?"

"Not Polish, to be sure."

Satisfied so far Bartek continued to examine the other carriages.

"Poor wretches," he said when he had concluded the review of the Infantry.

Presently he came to the carriages where the Zouaves were sitting. They

were in covered carriages therefore he could not verify their size but saw only their long beards and fierce frowning faces. His expression became thoughtful once more.

"These are more terrible," he whispered, as if afraid they might overhear him.

"Wait till you see those, they have not been able to make prisoners," remarked Voïtek.

"Oh, don't, for God's sake."

"You will see."

He looked a little longer at the Zouaves and then went further on.

He peeped into another carriage, but drew back in sudden terror, and gasped:

"God have mercy upon my sinful soul! Voïtek save me!"

In the open window the dark face of a Turco was visible whose upturned face showed the white of his eyes. He was evidently wounded judging by his expression.

"What is it?" said Voïtek.

"That is no soldier, it must be the devil himself. God have mercy upon us."

"Look at his enormous teeth."

"Bad luck to him, I will not look any more."

Bartek was silent; presently he asked.

"Would it do any good to make the sign of the cross over him."

"No, the heathens do not understand our holy faith."

The command is given to mount. After a few minutes the train is once more in motion. In the dark of the night Bartek had a vision of black Turcos showing the whites of their eyes. Judging from the present sensations of our warrior not much could be predicted concerning the future exploits.

CHAPTER IV.

A nearer participation in the pitched battle of Gravelotte made Bartek think in the beginning that a fight was a thing to be looked at but no work at all. His regiment had orders to stand with their muskets lowered at the foot of a vine clad hill. In the distance cannons were playing, whole regiments were rattling past him so that the earth seemed to shake under their horses hoofs. Cuirassiers' swords and Uhlans' lances flashed and glittered before his eyes. Over the hill, under the blue canopy of the sky, flew the hissing grenades in the shape of tiny clouds, then a volume of smoke darkened the horizon.

After some time a strange movement took place near Bartek's regiment.

They began to put other regiments there; cannons arrived as fast as the horses could drag them into an empty space between the troops. In a moment the horses were unharnessed and the cannons turned with their mouths towards the hill. The whole valley was rapidly filling with troops. Commands thunder in all directions and aide-de-camps are seen galloping about. Our privates whisper to each other: "we are going to get it hot." Or ask each other anxiously: "Is it beginning, already." Ah! already. It draws nearer and nearer, the uncertainty, the enigma; maybe death . . . . Behind the smoke which veils the hill there seems to be a seething, terrific turmoil. The growling voice of the cannon sounds nearer, so do the sharp cracks of the rifles. Far away there is an indistinct rattle, it is the sound of the mitrailleuse.

Presently the cannon, newly posted,

begin to roar so that earth and heaven seem to throb in unison. Strange hissing sounds reach Bartek's regiment. Something is floating in the air, a tiny cloudlet which seems to hiss and laugh, and gnash its teeth. The peasants cry out: " a shell! a shell!" The bird of war flies on faster and faster, comes nearer, falls and bursts. A terrible roar shakes the earth as if it were coming to pieces. There is confusion in the lines near the guns and a sharp command: "close the ranks!" Bartek is standing in the first line, his musket to his shoulder, his head in the air, his chin buckled with the strap of the pickelhaube therefore his teeth do not chatter. They are not allowed to move a muscle or to shoot. Their duty is to stand still, to wait.

Here comes another shell, a third, a fourth, a tenth! The wind disperses the smoke from the hill. The French

have dislodged the Prussian battery, put their own in its place, and are now vomiting fire upon the valley. Long, white streaks of smoke issue continually from between the vines. The Infantry under cover of their guns are coming down to begin the hand to hand firing. They are already halfway down and can be seen distinctly now the wind has swept away the smoke. It looks as if the vines had suddenly burst into poppy blossoms, they are the red caps of the Infantry. Now and then they disappear among the vines only the tricolors are visible. The cracking of the rifles comes now quick, sharp, and irregular; bursting out suddenly in different places. Above the cracking of the rifles hiss and howl the flying shells. Loud shouts come from the hill. From the valley German hurras reply. The cannons from the valley play incessantly. Bartek's regiment is still motionless.

A fiery atmosphere seems now to envelop it in its turn. Bullets buzz about like flies or whizz past their ears, eyes, noses and shoulders with fearful rapidity; there seems to be thousands, nay millions of them; a wonder anybody is still alive. Presently a loud moan: "Oh Jesus!" followed by the quick command: "Close the ranks!" sound close to Bartek. Again: "Oh Jesus!" and, "close the ranks!" At last the moans and words of command follow each other faster and faster; the whizzing of the bullets is almost incessant, horrible. They drag out the killed by their feet. A veritable last judgment.

"Are you afraid," asks Voïtek.

"Who would not be afraid," replies our hero with a shaking voice. Nevertheless they should stand there, Bartek and Voïtek, and it never even enters their heads that they might make a run for it. They have been ordered to

stand still and they stand. Bartek was not quite telling the truth; he was not afraid as thousands of others would be afraid in his place. Discipline predominates over his imagination and even his imagination does not paint things as horrible as they are. All the same Bartek thinks he will be killed and confides these thoughts to Voïtek.

"It will not make a hole in heaven when one fool goes off," says Voïtek, in an irritated voice.

The words seem to soothe Bartek. It almost seems as if he had mostly been concerned whether there would be a hole in heaven. Now he stands quietly and patiently, he feels only terribly hot and the perspiration pours down his face. In the meanwhile the firing is so awful that whole lines melt away before his eyes. There is nobody now to drag the dead and wounded from among them; their moans mingle with the hiss-

ing of the shells and roar of the cannon. By the movements of the tricolor standards they can see the infantry hidden in the vineyard drawing nearer. A shower of grapeshot thins the ranks which begin to get desperate.

In the sounds of despair there is an undercurrent of impatience and rage. At the first word of command they would rush on like a hurricane, but they cannot bear to stand still. One of the soldiers tears off his helmet dashes it on the ground and says:

"A goat can die but once!"

Bartek, when he hears that old saying feels wonderfully comforted, and all fear seems to go from him. If a goat must die some day then it is not a great thing after all. It is peasant philosophy, better than any other for it gives them heart. Bartek knew well enough that even a goat must die and can die but once, but it was comforting

to hear it again; all the more as the battle seemed to end in an awful calamity. There was his regiment which had not stirred from the spot, half gone already. Troops of soldiers from other regiments are running about in disorder only the peasants from Pognenbin and the adjacent villages stand firm but there seems a certain wavering in the ranks. A moment more and the restraint of discipline will give way. The ground under their feet becomes slippery with blood and its acrid smell mingles with the smell of gunpowder. In many places the ranks cannot close because the dead lie between them. At the feet of these men who are still standing lie their dead or dying comrades. There seems to be no air to breathe and a low murmur becomes audible:

"They brought us here to be slaughtered!"

"Nobody will escape."

"Still, Polniches Vick!" sounds the voice of the officer.

"It's well for you, behind my back!"

"Steht der Kerl da!"

Suddenly a voice speaks out:

"Under Thy protection."

Bartek accompanies at once.

"We take refuge, Oh Holy Mother of God!"

Presently, a chorus of Polish voices sings the hymn to Our Lady of Chenstohovo. Out in the field of destruction. Before the last sound had died away, almost as if in answer to their prayer, an aide-de-camp is seen galloping towards them; the word of command is given: "To the attack! Hurrah! Forward!"

They draw themselves out in a long line and and at the point of the bayonet rush towards the hill in search of the enemy whom the eye does not as yet

perceive. About two hundred steps separates them from the top, which they have to cross under a murderous fire. Will they be all slain or will they retreat? They may be slain but retreat they will not, because the Prussian commander knows to what tune the Polish peasant lads will fight. Above the roaring of the cannon, the cracking of the rifles, and moans of the dying, rises in clear, silvery tones the Polish national hymn which makes the blood run faster in their veins. "Hurrah," they shout. Their faces glowing with enthusiasm, they rush on over dead bodies of men and horses like a hurricane. The wounded sink down, others go on with shouts and song. They are at last on the verge of the vineyard and disappear in the thicket. Now and then a snatch of song is heard, or the bayonets flash among the vines. The firing from the hill is more terrible than ever; in the

valley below the trumpets are still playing the same tune. The discharge of the guns becomes quicker, and quicker, feverishly quick, then suddenly they became silent.

Down in the valley, the old war dog Steinmetz lights his big pipe, and says with an air of satisfaction:

"Play them their own tunes! They have got there, the gallant lads!"

Presently one of the proudly waving tricolors seems to be raised high in the air, bends down, then disappears.

"They are not trifling up there," said Steinmetz.

The trumpets still play the same tune. Another of the Posen regiments goes to reinforce the first. In the vineyard rages the battle with fixed bayonets.

Now, oh, Muse! sing the praises of Bartek, that the lads of future ages may know what he did. Terror, impatience, despair, blending together in his mind,

created there another feeling, that of frenzy; when the familiar melody reached his ear, every vein in his body seemed to stretch out like wire. His hair bristled on his head, and his eyes shot fire. He forgot the world, forgot that a goat dies but once, but took the musket into his capacious fist and rushed onwards. Before reaching the hill he tumbled down about ten times, bruised his nose and made it bleed, but rushed on panting and furious. He opened his eyes still wider in order to see the French, and there he found three, close to the standard. They were Turcos. Do you think Bartek drew back? Not he; he would now have tackled the archfiend himself. He came up to them, and they rushed at him with yells and bayonets. Two sharp points are almost touching his breast, when Bartek grasping his bayonet, whirls it round and round. A yell and a shriek, and two dark bodies are writhing on the ground.

At this moment the third, who was holding the standard, comes up with ten more. Bartek, like a fury, rushes upon them. They fire: a flash and a roar! at the same time from the clouds of smoke comes the hoarse shout of Bartek:

"Missed, this time!"

And again his bayonet whirls round and yells answer to his blows. The Turcos begin to retreat, terrified at the onslaught of the frantic giant; and whether Bartek heard wrongly or whether they called out something in Arabic, enough that it seemed to him that from their thick lips came a shout of:

"Magda! Magda!"

"Ah! it's Magda you want is it?" roared Bartek, and with one bound he hurled himself in the very middle of the enemy. Fortunately other Barteks, Voïteks, and Matieks came to his help. Among the vines a close hand to hand fight ensued,

accompanied by the cracking of the rifles and the panting breath of the warriors. Bartek raged like a hurricane. His hands moved with the fearful rapidity of a machine carrying destruction everywhere. Begrimed with powder, dust and blood, with scarcely anything human in him, he rushed on blindly, throwing down his man at every blow, breaking muskets and heads alike. When he came near the standard bearer he seized him by the throat so that his eyes started out of their sockets and his hands let fall the tricolor.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bartek, and raising the standard, he waved it in the air. This raising and falling of the tricolor was what General Steinmetz had seen from the valley below. But he could see it only for a moment; for in the next Bartek brought it down upon a goldlaced kepi.

In the meanwhile his companions

rushed on. Bartek remained alone for a minute. He tore off the tricolor, secured it under his uniform; then seizing the shaft with both his hands followed his companions.

A troop of Turcos fled howling towards the battery on the top of the hill, the Polish peasant lads after them with bayonets.

The Zouaves, near the cannons, open a sharp musket fire upon both. The soldiers came up to the battery and another encounter with drawn swords takes place. At this moment the second Posen regiment came up to help the first. The tricolor staff is like some infernal flail in Bartek's powerful hands. Every stroke made a clearing in the close ranks of the French. Zouaves and Turcos fled from the spot where Bartek wielded his weapon. Shortly afterwards Bartek was seen sitting astride on a cannon as if it was his piebald horse in Pognenbin.

Before the soldiers had time to see him he sat on a second near which he knocked down the standard bearer with the colors.

"Hurrah, Bartek!" repeated the soldiers.

The victory was complete. All the cannons were taken. The scattered French infantry coming upon another Prussian regiment on the other side of the hill laid down their arms.

Bartek in the pursuit captured a third standard.

To see him walking down the hill with his companions, covered with blood and perspiration, panting like a steam engine, carrying three flags on his shoulders was a sight to see. Close to him bruised and gashed walked his comrade Voïtek. Bartek turned to him:

"What did you tell me about the French? Why, they are as weak as water, no power in their limbs at all.

They scratched me and you a little, like kittens, that's all. Whenever I touched them, down they came like ninepins."

"Who was to know that you were such a terrible chap," replied Voïtek, who began to look at him with different eyes. And who had not seen these deeds? History, the whole regiment, and nearly all the officers. They all looked wonderingly at the gigantic peasant with the yellow moustache and protruding eyes.

"Ach! Su verfluchter Polake! [Oh, you cursed Pole!]" said the major, pulling his ear playfully; and Bartek showed all his teeth in a pleasant smile. When the regiment arrived at the foot of the hill the major pointed him out to the colonel and the colonel to Steinmetz himself.

The general looked at the standards and ordered them to be taken away, then he looked attentively at Bartek.

Bartek stood again straight as an arrow, and presented arms. The old general wagged his head and looked pleased. Presently he turned to the major and the word is distinctly heard : "Unter-officer."

"Zu dumm, Excellenz, [too dumb, your Excellency]," replies the major.

"Let us try," says his Excellency, and turning his horse approached Bartek.

Bartek scarcely knows what is happening to him. An unheard of thing in the Prussian army: A general is going to converse with a common soldier. It is all the easier for his Excellency who speaks Polish. Besides the soldier has taken three flags and two cannons.

"Where do you come from?" asks the general.

"From Pognenbin," replies Bartek.

"Good. What is your name?"

"Bartek Slovik."

"Do you know why you are fighting against the French?"

"I know, Celency."

"Tell me."

Bartek begins to stammer: "Because, Because—!" Suddenly Voïtek's explanation flashes through his mind and he bursts out quickly so as not to forget it again:

"Because they are a kind of Germans, but a much worse kind."

The face of his Excellency twitches ominously. He had a great desire to laugh, and turned towards the major, and says:

"You were quite right."

Bartek satisfied with himself stands like a maypole.

"Who has won the battle to day," the general asks again.

"I, Celency," answers Bartek, without hesitation.

"So you have, and here is your reward."

And the old warrior takes the Iron

Cross from his breast, stoops down, and fastens it on Bartek's breast. The general good humor reflects itself in a natural way in the faces of the colonel, majors', captains', even the sergeants'. After the departure of the general, the colonel gives Bartek ten thalers, the major five, and so on. They all tell him laughingly that he has won the battle, and Bartek is in the seventh heaven.

Strange to say, Voïtek seems to be not at all satisfied with our hero.

In the evening, when they are sitting by the camp fire, and Bartek's noble countenance is distended with pea-sausage, as much as the sausage is distended with peas, Voïtek said in a tone of resignation:

"Ah, Bartek, you are a fool, the biggest fool, I ever came across."

"What's wrong now?" says Bartek indistinctly through the pea-sausage.

"Whatever possessed you, to tell the general that the French are some kind of Germans?"

"You told me so yourself."

"But you ought to have remembered that the general and officers are Germans themselves."

"And what of that?"

Voïtek began to stammer: "Even if they be Germans, one ought not to tell them so to their faces, it isn't polite."

"I said it of the French, not of them."

"Ah but . . ."

Voïtek suddenly stopped; he evidently meant to explain to Bartek that in the presence of Germans one ought not to speak disparagingly of Germans, but somehow his tongue could not express it.

CHAPTER V.

Some time afterwards the Prussian post brought the following letter to Pognenbin:

"Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Mother! Dearest Magda. What is the news at home? You are well off in your cabin and feather beds while I am fighting terribly. We have been near the great fortress of Metz, and there has been a big fight and I walloped the French so that all the Infantry and Artillery were astonished. The general himself was astonished, said I had won the battle, and gave me his Cross. And now the officers and sergeants respect me very much and do not knock me about as much as they formerly did. Then we marched on and

there was another battle, I forgot the name of the town. I gave it to the French again, and took another of their standards, also dragged the biggest colonel of the Cuirassiers from his horse and made him a prisoner. And when our regiments are going home the sergeant advises me to send in a petition to remain at the war; there is not much sleep to be got but plenty to eat and plenty of wine, because the nation is powerfully rich.

We burned one village right to the ground and did not spare anybody. I did as the others. We burned a church, because the people here are Catholics, same as we, and many of them got scorched. We are going now for the Emperor himself, and then there will be an end to the war. Take care of the cabin, and little Frank, because if you don't I shall have to use the stick and let you know what I am. God be with you."

Bartek Slovik."

Bartek had evidently taken kindly to his new occupation and begun to regard the war as his proper element. He gradually acquired much self-reliance and went into battle as if he were preparing for his field labors in Pognenbin. Medals and Crosses increased on his breast and though he was not made an under-officer, he was considered the foremost man in the ranks. He was as formerly, a great disciplinarian, and possessed that blind courage which does not take any account of danger. It was not now the result of frenzy as in the very beginning; it arose now from a soldier's practice and unbounded confidence in himself. His enormous physical strength carried him through hardships and marches to which weaker men succumbed; but he became more savage, more and more a stern Prussian soldier. He not only fought the French but also began to hate them. His whole character

seemed to change and he was rapidly transforming himself into a soldier-patriot, and blindly worshipped his leaders. In the next letter to Magda, he wrote:

"Voïtek has been cut to pieces, but that is war, you understand. He was also a fool for telling me that the French are Germans, which is not true; they are French and the Germans are our own people."

Magda in her reply to his two letters, rated him soundly. "Dearly beloved Bartek," she wrote, "joined to me in wedlock, at the holy altar. May the Lord punish you! You are no better than a foolish heathen to join the Lutherans in murdering Catholics. You delight in war, you big blockhead, because there is nothing to do but to fight, eat and drink, and maltreat other people; no fast days to observe. For the burning of churches, and your hardness to poor people on which you pride your-

self, you will have to burn in hell. Remember, sheepshead, that it is written in golden letters in our faith throughout the Polish nation, that at the last judgment the Lord will not have mercy on such lubbers as you, and reflect therefore in time. Turk that you are! I should like to punch that head of yours soundly. I send you five thalers though money be scarce and things are not going well. I embrace you, dearly beloved Bartek." Magda.

The teachings contained in the letter did not make much impression upon Bartek. Women do not understand military duty and yet want to meddle with it, he thought. And he went on in his old way. He distinguished himself in almost every battle, so that at last more august eyes than those of Steinmetz took notice of him. At last when the exhausted Posen regiments

were sent to Germany, he, acting on the Sergeant's advice, sent in a petition and remained. Consequently he found himself before "Paris."

His letters now were full of scorn for the French. "In every battle they run like hares," he wrote to Magda. He was not far wrong. But the siege was not much to his taste. For whole days they had to dig trenches under a drenching sky; and listen to the booming of the guns. Beside that, he regretted his old regiment. The one to which he had been transferred was composed mainly of Germans. He spoke a little German, which he had learned at the factory, but not much. Now he talked more freely. They called him "polnischer Ochs," but his medals and powerful fists shielded him from more offensive treatment. After several encounters with the enemy he gained the respect of his new comrades and began to

grow more familiar with them. At last they regarded him as one of their own, because he brougt honor upon the whole regiment. Formerly Bartek would have resented as the greatest insult to be called a German, but now in opposition to the French he called himself a "Deutscher." It seemed to him that it was now different altogether from the others. But there occurred an event which would have given him much to think of if his heroic mind had been capable of deep thoughts.

It came to pass that several companies of his regiment were sent out to lay in ambush for a detachment of Franc-tireurs. This time Bartek did not see the red caps flying in all directions after the first shots; the detachment was composed of old soldiers, the remnant of a foregn legion. Surrounded, they defended themselves obstinately and at last tried to fight their way

through the circle of Prussian soldiers. They went at it with such force that they partly succeeded, they would die rather than be made prisoners, knowing the fate which awaited the Franc-tireurs. Bartek's company took two prisoners, who towards evening were confined in a forester's hut, the next day they were to be shot. Several soldiers were posted before the entrance, Bartek was stationed in the room close to the shattered window together with the fettered prisoners.

One of them was an elderly man with a greyish moustache and a grave, impassive face; the other looked as if he had not seen more than twenty summers; there was a golden down upon his lips and his face looked more like a girl's than a soldier's.

"This is the end of it," said the younger of the prisoners, "a bullet in the head and that's all."

Bartek started suddenly and the musket shook in his hand; the young man had spoken in Polish.

"It is all one to me," said the other in a weary voice. "I have knocked about so much and have enough of it."

Bartek's heart beat faster and faster under his uniform.

"Listen," continued the elder man, "there is nothing for it but to submit to fate. If you are afraid, try, and think of something else, lie down and go to sleep. Life at its best is but a pitiful business. I am glad it is over."

"I am sorry for my mother," said the young man in a dull voice.

Presently, as if to stifle his emotion or to appear unconcerned, he began to whistle but left off suddenly and said in a despairing voice: "And I never even said goodbye to her."

"You ran away from home?"

"Yes. I thought they would beat the

Germans and life might be made easier for us Poles."

"I thought so too. And now—."

The rest of the sentence was drowned in the howling wind. The night was dark. Then rain came down in sudden gusts through the broken panes of the window, beyond it stretched the forest like a sombre pall. The wind whistled in the corners of the room and howled in the chimney. The little lamp placed above the window threw a flickering light into the room but Bartek who stood beneath it, was shrouded in darkness.

It was as well perhaps that the prisoners did not see his face. Strange things were going on in the lad's mind. First, he had looked with wide open wondering eyes at the prisoners and tried to understand what they were speaking about. They had been fighting the Germans in order to make life easier for

the Poles in Prussia and he had fought the French for that same reason. And these two would be shot to-morrow! What did it all mean? What was he, a poor peasant to make of it? He might tell them that he too was a Pole and felt sorry for them. Suddenly something seemed to squeeze his throat. What could he tell them? Could he save them? If he did, he would be shot, too! Good God, what is happening to him? He is almost choking with grief and can scarcely stand quiet. A terrible longing takes hold of him. Pity and compassion, rare visitors in a soldier's heart cry aloud within him: "Bartek save them, they are your own people." His thoughts turn longingly towards Magda and Pognenbin as they never did before. He has enough of France, enough of fighting and marching. The voice grows louder and more imperative: "Bartek save your breth-

ren." May the war go to perdition! Through the broken windows the dark forest looms in the distance; the wind sighs and rustles among the trees as it does among the pines at Pognenbin, and it seems to call out again and again:

"Bartek save your own flesh and blood."

Shall he make a run for it with them into the forest? Every fibre within him drilled by Prussian discipline thrills at the mere thought. "In the name of the Father, the Son . . . " He crossed himself. He a soldier should desert his post? Never!

In the meantime the wind roars louder in the forest and moans around them dolefully.

The elder prisoner suddenly remaks:

"It sounds like the autumn winds at home."

"Don't," says the younger in a depressed voice.

After a short pause he himself repeats several times:

"At home! at home! at home! oh, my God!"

A deep-drawn sigh mingles with the moaning wind and the prisoners subside into silence.

Bartek begins to shake as if he had a fit of ague.

It is the worst when one is unable to account for one's sensations. Bartek had not robbed anybody and yet it seemed to him as if he had done it and was in mortal fear to be taken up for it. Nothing threatened him that he was aware of, and yet he is terribly afraid. His knees give way under him, the musket seemed to weigh like lead on his arms, his throat seems scorched. Is it Magda or is it Pognenbin he is sorry for? It is both; but still more so for the young prisoner for whom he is so sorry that he does not know what to do.

It seems to Bartek that he fell into a doze. The storm outside increases in violence. The howling wind multiplies the strange voices and whispers.

Suddenly his hair under the pickelhaube stands on end. He has heard distinctly in the depth of the forest a moan and a voice repeating: "At home! At home! At home!"

Bartek shakes himself and knocks the butt end of the musket on the floor to wake himself.

He is himself again. He turns round; the prisoners are lying in the corner, the lamp flickers uneasily, everything is in its place. The light is now falling straight upon the young prisoner's face. It is the face of a child or a girl. His eyes are shut, he lies upon a bunch of straw and looks like dead.

Bartek has never in his life felt such a knawing pain before; it is as if the tears were struggling upwards from the

breast to his throat, and there stuck fast and strangled him.

The old man turns round with difficulty on the other side and says: "Good night, Ladislas."

Then follows a deep silence. An hour passes. Bartek feels very queer.

The wind plays now like the organ in Pognenbin church.

The prisoners lie quiet; suddenly the younger starts up.

"Karol!"

"What is it?"

"Were you asleep?"

"No."

"Listen! I am afraid. Say what you will, I am going to pray."

"Do."

"Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come."

A sudden sob interrupts the words of the young prisoner, but in a stifled voice the words ring out:

"Thy will be done."

"Oh, Jesus," something is crying out in Bartek's heart.

No, he cannot bear it any longer. A moment more, and he must cry out, "Oh Master, I am one of your own people, a Polish peasant. Then into the forest! Let become of them what will."

Suddenly from the outside the steady tramp of the patrol becomes audible. It is the relieving watch, headed by the sergeant. The next morning Bartek was drunk. The following day also.

Later on new marches, encounters and fights followed, and I am glad to state that our hero recovered his balance. After that night there remained with him a slight fondness for the bottle —so easily acquired—in which may be found forgetfulness.

CHAPTER VI.

Again some months passed. Spring was well advanced. In the orchard of Pognenbin the cherry trees were in full bloom and the fields and meadows gay with corn and flowers. Magda was sitting before the cabin preparing some wrinkled sprouting potatoes, more fit for cattle than human beings. But it was spring, and poverty was looking in at the doors of the rural inhabitants. This was evident also from Magda's face, which had lost some of the fresh coloring and looked pale and troubled. Maybe to distract herself she began singing in a high pitched voice:

"My Janek is in the war,
And writes to his wifie at home."

The sparrows in the cherry-trees twittered louder as if trying to emulate her and she, still singing, looked absently at the dog sleeping in the sun, then at the road passing near the cabin and at the footpath leading through the garden into the fields. Perhaps Magda looked mostly at the footpath because it was a short-cut leading to the station, and as it happened this day she did not look in vain. In the far distance somebody was approaching. The woman shaded her eyes, but could not see clearly, the sun being so bright. Lysek woke up, raised his head, and gave a short bark; then began sniffing the air, pricked up his ears and turned his head thoughtfully on one side. At the same time the tune of a ditty carried along by the breeze reached her ear. Lysek jumped up and raced towards the approaching figure. Magda grew a shade paler.

"Bartek, can it be Bartek?"

She rose so suddenly as to upset the dish with the potatoes; there was no doubt now. Lysek had jumped right up on the breast of the newcomer. The woman rushed forth, shouting from joy with all her strength:

"Bartek! Bartek!"

"Magda, it is me," called out Bartek, making a speaking trumpet of both his hands and hastening his steps.

He opened the gate, missed the bolt, and tumbled almost headlong into her arms.

The woman began to talk very fast.

"Ah! I did not think you would ever come back. I thought they had killed you. . . Show yourself, let me look well at you. You look thin and lean! Oh, Jesus! Oh, you stupid Bartek! He has come back! He has come back!"

Then she loosened her arms from his neck to look at him, then she clasped him round the neck again.

"He has come back! Praised be the Lord! My old dear Bartek! Well, come into the cabin. Frank is at school! The German is very hard on the children; but the boy is well, he has got your goggle eyes. Ah! it was high time you came back, because things want to be looked after by a man. The cabin is going to pieces, the barn is letting in water. Oh, Bartek, Bartek! that my eyes should see you again in the body! What trouble I had with the hay, but the neighbors helped me a little. And are you all right again? Oh, the joy of seeing you again. God has preserved you for me! Come inside. Oh, Lord! It is Bartek, and yet it isn't. What have they done to you?"

Magda had only now seen the long red scar which marked his face from temple to chin.

"It's nothing: a Cuirassier touched me but I gave it him back, and something more. I have been in the hospital."

"Oh, good Lord!"

"It's only a scratch."

"You are as thin as a lath."

"Ruhig, be quiet," said Bartek.

He looked indeed lean, black, and ragged. A regular conqueror. He was also unsteady on his feet.

"What is the matter with you, have you been drinking?"

"No, I am weak."

He was weak, but he also had been drinking! in his present weak condition a glass would have been sufficient to upset him, and he had taken three or four at the station. Thence the mien and bearing of a conqueror. He never had that mien before.

"Ruhig!" he repeated, "we have finished the Krieg (war). Now, I am master, you understand? Do you see this?" and he pointed to his medals and crosses. "Now you know what I am! Ah!"

"Right—left; right, left—halt!"

The last word he shouted with such tremendous force that the woman started and drew a few steps away.

"Have you gone mad?"

"How do you do, Magda? When I say 'How do!' I mean 'How are you.' Do you understand French, foolish woman? Mossoo, mossoo! you know."

"Man alive, what has come over you?"

"What's that to you? Was? Done diner! You understand?"

On Magda's brow a storm was gathering.

"What are you jabbering? Can't you speak Polish? There's a German for you! What have they done to you?"

"Give me something to eat!"

"Go inside, at once!"

Every word of command made an irresistible impression upon Bartek. Hearing the words "go in at once," he straightened himself, laid both arms flat against his hips, turned half round and

marched in the given direction. On the threshold he seemed to recover himself and began to look wonderingly at Magda.

"Well, Magda?"

"Go on!"

He went in, but tumbled down near the threshold. The alcohol had mounted to his brain. He began to sing and look round for Frank. He said even: "Morgen, Kerl" (morning, fellow), though the boy was not there. Then he laughed, made a long step, two little ones, shouted "hurrah!" and fell full length on the bed.

In the evening he woke up sober and rested; greeted Frank, and coaxing from Magda a handful of pence went triumphantly to the inn. The fame of his deeds had preceded him to Pognenbin, through other soldiers from the same regiment who had told about his daring exploits at Gravelotte and Sedan. When

the news spread that the hero had come back and was at the inn, his old companions hastened to see him.

There he sits behind the table very unlike the Bartek of former times. He used to be humble minded and quiet enough; now he smites the table with his fist, swells himself out like a turkeycock and gobbles like one.

"You remember, boys, when we licked the French? What did Steinmetz say?"

"Why should we not remember?"

"There was a deal of talk about the French; but they are a weak lot. They eat salad like hares and run like hares. They don't drink beer, either, only wine."

"Ah! Ah!"

"When we burned their villages, they called out *pitie! pitie!* which means let us be. But we didn't take much notice of that."

"Then one can understand what they say?"

"You don't understand, because you are stupid. Done dipen (give bread), do you know what that means?"

"Whatever are you talking about?"

"And have you seen Paris? There we had fights, one after the other, and they got beaten at every one. They have no commanders—so people say. The fence is sound enough, but the pegs are rotten. Their officers are no good and their generals are old women, and ours are all good."

Mathew Kierz, a wise husbandman from Pognenbin, wagged his head.

"The Germans have had the best of a terrible war, and we helped them to win, but whether it will do us any good God alone knows."

Bartek looked at him with wide open eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"The Germans did not treat us with much consideration before the war, and

now they are as stuck up as if there was no God above them. They will now trample on us. They are doing so already."

"That is not true," said Bartek.

Now old Mathew was an authority in Pognenbin, and the whole village followed his lead; it would have been considered impertinent to contradict him; but Bartek was now a conqueror and an authority himself.

All the same they looked at him with astonishment, almost with displeasure, as if to say: "Who are you, to contradict old Mathew?"

"What do I care for Mathew! I have talked with bigger men than Mathew. Do you understand? Boys! did I not talk with Steinmetz? and if Mathew says what's not true, I must tell him so. We shall be much better off now."

Mathey looked steadily at the conqueror.

"Oh, you fool," he said.

Bartek brought his fist down, which made the glasses and tankards jump.

"Still der Kerl da! [Keep quiet, you rascal!]"

"Be quiet, and do not shout. Ask the priest or the Pan Jarzynski."

"The priest has not been at the war, or the Pan either. I have been. Do not believe him lads; they will respect us now. Who won their battles? We did. I did. Now they will give me whatever I ask for. If I want to become a land owner in France, they will give me land. The government knows who licked the French. Our regiments were the best. They wrote it in their despatches and the Poles are now first with them."

Mathew waved his hand, rose and left the room.

Bartek had conquered in the field of politics. The younger men who remained looked at him, and he proceeded:

"They would give me whatever I ask for. If it had not been for me . . well, well . . . Old Mathew is a fool, you understand. Government tells us to fight, we fight. Who will dare to treat me badly? A German! I should like to see it!" And he pointed to his medals.

"I am better than any German. No German has got as many as I. Bring more beer! I talked with Steinmetz, and talked with Podbielski. Bring more beer!"

By and by the drinking became furious. Bartek began to sing:

"Drink! drink! drink!
So long as a thaler in my pocket chinks."

And he pulled out of his pocket a handful of pence.

"Take it! I am now a Pan. . . You won't? Ah, it wasn't such coins we took in France, but it's all gone. Not a few we killed and burned out. God knows how many, all sorts. Franc-tireurs."

The flight of fancy in drunken people undergoes sudden changes. Quite unexpectedly, Bartek gathered together his money, and exclaimed dolefully:

"Oh Lord, have mercy upon my sinful soul!"

Then he leaned both elbows upon the table, buried his face in his hands, and remained silent.

"What ails you?" asked one of the convivial crew.

"It was not my fault," muttered Bartek gloomily. "They fell into their hands, but I was sorry for them, because they were my own countrymen. God have mercy upon my soul! The one was bright as the rising sun; the next day he was white as a sheet. And they shuffled the earth on them while they were yet breathing.—Vodka!"

There was an ominous silence. The peasants looked at each other wonderingly.

"What is he saying?"

"He is having it out with his conscience."

"It's that which makes a man drink," muttered Bartek.

He took a gulp at the spirits, then another. He sat silent for a few minutes, then spat on the floor, and unexpectedly his good humor came back.

"And did you talk with Steinmetz? I did. Hurrah! Who pays? I do!"

"You pay? you drunkard, you!" called out the shrill voice of Magda; "I will pay you out, never fear!"

Bartek looked at his wife with lack-lustre eyes.

"Did you talk with Steinmetz? Who are you?"

Magda, instead of answering, turned towards the sympathetic audience and began to lament:

"Oh people! people! you see my shame and my grief. He came back and

I rejoiced as over a great thing; but he came back drunk. He has forgotten his God and his own decent language. He went to sleep and got sober and now he drinks again. Where has he got the money from? It's from my earning, my own blood and sweat. Oh, my men! he is not a good Catholic or a man any longer; he is nothing but a bewitched German, who jabbers in their tongue and thinks of nothing, but worsting other people. He is a changeling, he is . . . "

Here the woman burst into tears, and raising her voice to a higher pitch, exclaimed:

"What of his being a fool so long as he was kind and honest. See what they have made of him now! Good Lord! much enduring Lord! And I looked out for him night and morning, and now he has come, what good is he to me? May he turn crazy altogether, may he become an out and out German!"

The last words she said in a scornfully singing voice.

Then Bartek rose and spake:

"Stop that, or I shall beat you!"

"Beat me, cut my head off, kill, murder me," called out the woman aggressively, baring her throat, and turning to the peasants, exclaimed:

"And you people shall see it done."

But the peasants began to get out quickly. Presently the inn was deserted by all but Bartek and the woman with the bared throat.

"Why do you crane that neck like a goose?" growled Bartek. "Come home."

"Cut my throat," repeated Magda.

"There, there—I won't," said Bartek, and put his hands in his pockets.

The innkeeper, anxious to put an end to the contest, extinguished the single candle. Everything became dark and quiet. After a few minutes, from the darkness came the shrill voice of Magda:

"Cut off my head!"

"There! I will not do it," answered the triumphant voice of Bartek.

By the light of the moon two figures were seen wending their way towards the cottages. One of them walking in front and lamenting loudly was Magda; behind her, humbly enough, with bent head, marched the conqueror at Gravelotte and Sedan.

CHAPTER VII.

Bartek had come home, but so weak that he could not go to work for many days. This was a great misfortune, because the property needed a man's hand very badly. Magda did what she could. She worked from morning till night; the neighbors helped a little, but it was not enough, and the work fell behind. There was a debt owing to a German settler named Just, who at one time had bought a big piece of barren land and now possessed a nice property. He lent money at a high interest. The lord of the manor, even Pan Jarzynski, owed him considerable sums, as he kept up an establishment beyond his means. Magda owed him some fifty thalers, part of which she had spent in repairs, and some of it had been sent to Bartek. It was

not much. A good year and steady work would soon have set them right again. Unfortunately Bartek could not work. Magda was not quite willing to believe this and went to the priest to ask him what to do to wake the man up; but Bartek was really not fit for work. His breath was short, and any exertion made his back ache. He therefore sat all the day long before his cabin and smoked a big pipe with a portrait of Bismarck, in his white uniform, carved on it, and looked around with the half sleepy, tired eyes of a man who is disinclined to move. He pondered a little about the war, the victories, and Magda; a little about everything, and nothing in particular.

One day when thus occupied he heard from a distance the loud wailing of his boy Frank.

Frank was coming from school and howling to make one's ears split. Bartek took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Well, Frank, what's up now?"

"Ah, what's up?" repeated the sobbing lad.

"What are you crying for?"

"How can I help crying when I got knocked on the head?"

"Who has knocked you?"

"Who should ha' knocked me about but Pan Boege!"

Herr Boege was the schoolmaster in Pognenbin.

"What right has he to beat you?"

"It seems he has, because he does it."

Magda, who was digging in the garden, climbed over the fence with the spade in her hand, and went towards the child.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"What should I've been doing? I've done nothing. It was Boege who knocked me down, and called me a Polish hog, and said as now they had got the better of the French they would get the better

of us, and kick us out altogether. I had done nothing to him. He asked me who was the greatest man in the world, and I said the Holy Father, and then he beat me, and called me a Polish hog. I cried and I says and he says:

Frank began to repeat in continual turns, "I says, and he says;" at last Magda turned to Bartek, and exclaimed:

"Do you hear that? Go and fight the French and let the Germans knock your innocent child about. Go and fight for them, there is your reward—may the Lord . . . . "

Here Magda, overcome by her feelings, began to mingle her tears and sobs with those of Frank, and Bartek opened his eyes and mouth and stood amazed—so amazed that he could not find either a word to say or understand what had happened. How was it, and what about all his victories? He sat silent a few moments, and then a gleam came into his

eyes, and the blood rushed to his head. Astonishment as well as fright often produces rage in the simple minded. Bartek suddenly jumped up and said through his clenched teeth:

"I will have some talk with him."

He had not very far to go. The school was close to the church. Herr Boege was standing before his house surrounded by a litter of pigs, to which he threw small pieces of bread. He was a tall and strong man of fifty, with a fat face and fishy eyes, which were not devoid of either energy or intelligence. Bartek went close up to him.

"Why do you beat my child, you German?" he asked.

Herr Boege retreated a few steps, measured his interlocutor from head to foot without any trace of fear, and said, phlegmatically:

"Be off with you, Polish fool!"

"Why do you beat the child?"

"I will beat you if you don't take yourself off, Polish lubber!"

"We will soon show you who is master. Go to the devil, or to law, or wherever you like."

Bartek grasped the teacher by the shoulder, shook him violently and shouted in a hoarse voice:

"Do you know who I am? Do you know who fought the French? Who talked with Steinmetz? Why do you beat my child, you German potato bag?"

Herr Boege's fishy eyes started out of their sockets as much as Bartek's, but with a mighty effort he freed himself from his assailant, and Bartek received his answer in a sounding box on the ear.

Then the conqueror lost all command over himself and Boege's head shook like the pendulum of a clock with the difference that the motion was frightfully quick. The giant who had slain Zouaves and Turcos became alive in Bartek.

Boege's twenty-year old son, as strong as his father, rushed to the rescue. A battle short and terrible ensued, the son lay sprawling on the ground and Boege felt himself lifted from the ground. Bartek, in raising him, had no definite purpose in his mind. Unfortunately there stood close to the house a barrel full of swill, stored away by the thrifty Frau Boege, and presently the schoolmaster's feet were seen sticking out above the top, which was stirred by his convulsive motions. Frau Boege rushed out of the house.

"Help! help!"

The quick-witted woman, without losing time, tilted the barrel to one side, and spilled out her husband, together with the swill.

From the neighboring cottages some ten or more German settlers hastened to the rescue. They all fell upon Bartek with sticks and fists. A general melée

ensued, in which it was difficult to distinguish Bartek from his foes: some fifteen bodies were tightly wedged together in one compact mass, which moved convulsively. Suddenly from that mass Bartek rushed madly towards the fence.

The Germans after him; at the same time there was a crack, the fence swayed in Bartek's iron grasp, and he raised a big stake above his head, and turned round.

The assailants fled and Bartek sped in pursuit.

Fortunately he did not catch up with them; his wrath, too, had cooled down by this time and he retreated towards his cabin. If his enemies had been Frenchmen, the retreat would have been immortalized by history.

It was thus: the colonists having been reinforced by a few more of their countrymen, again pressed Bartek closely. He retreated slowly, like a boar assailed

by a pack of hounds. Now and then he turned round or stood still; they stood motionless also. The long, heavy stake filled them with respect. They threw stones and one of the missiles struck Bartek on the forehead. The blood streamed over his eyes. He tottered on his feet, let go the stake, and fell.

"Hurrah!" shouted the colonists.

But before they reached him he had risen. That kept them at a distance; the wounded boar might yet prove dangerous. Besides, they had arrived near the first cottages whence some of the peasants came running out towards the scene of combat. They therefore withdrew to their houses.

"What has happened?" asked the newcomers.

"I've only been patting some Germans on the head," replied Bartek.

Then he fainted.

CHAPTER VIII.

The affair assumed threatening proportions. The German papers wrote long and rousing articles about the persecutions, to which quiet, inoffensive German inhabitants were exposed from the hands of ignorant and barbarous masses, swayed by religious fanaticism and rebellious agitators. Boege was transformed into a hero. The quiet, patient teacher, who on the confines of the empire was spreading knowledge; the true missionary of civilization among the barbarians had first fallen a victim in the disturbances. Fortunately there was the whole German empire to protect him . . . and so on.

Bartek did not know what stormy clouds were gathering over his head. He

was full of confidence in the justice of his case. Had not the schoolmaster ill-treated his child and then attacked him, Bartek, first? And then all those men had come down upon him. He was obliged to defend himself. They had broken his head with a stone. They had ill-treated him, about whom all the newspapers had written in praise; who had spoken with Steinmetz, and gained all those medals on the fields of battle. He could not understand how it was the Germans did not know all this; could not make out how Boege could speak about kicking the Poles out of their own country, when they had fought so gallantly against the French whenever they got the chance. As far as he was concerned it was all right, the Government was sure to take his side. Why, Steinmetz himself would not let him be wronged. Bartek had suffered from the war, he had lost his strength, and got into debt;

they would never refuse him justice. Presently the gendarmes came to Pognenbin to fetch Bartek. They evidently expected resistance, as five men, with loaded rifles, had been sent to take him. But Bartek did not dream of resisting. They ordered him to mount upon the wagon and he mounted. Magda alone lamented, and repeated persistently:

"Oh! what need was there to fight so terribly against the French; now you have got the reward, poor man!"

"Be quiet, foolish woman," said Bartek, not unkindly; and he smiled gaily enough at the passers by.

"I will show them who it is they have wronged," he called out to them.

And, decorated with all his medals, he drove triumphantly to the court. The judges were lenient with him. They agreed about extenuating circumstances and sentenced Bartek to three months imprisonment and a fine of one hundred

and fifty marks, to be paid to those upon whom he had inflicted bodily harm.

The "Posener Zeitung," in reporting the case, remarked "that the prisoner did not exhibit any repentance for the deed, but, on the contrary, used most violent language, and in a most barefaced way reproached the government with ingratitude for his services. It was astonishing that the judge did not increase his punishment for contempt of court and for his offensive language towards the German race in general.

In prison, Bartek had now ample leisure to review his deeds at Gravelotte and Sedan.

It would not be just to say that the behavior of Boege, the schoolmaster, did not call forth any public censure. On the contrary, one foggy morning a Polish member in the German Parliament, with great oratorical power, drew attention to the demeanor of the German

government towards their Polish subjects, suggesting that, considering the great valor and sacrifices of the Posen regiments more regard might be shown for the laws of humanity in the annexed Polish provinces. He finally showed how Herr Boege had abused his position of teacher by beating and reviling Polish children and using threatening language to their parents.

While the member was holding forth the rain was pattering against the windows, which is conducive to drowsiness; therefore the Conservatives yawned, National Liberals followed their example, and the centre was nodding. The time of the Culturkamph had not begun yet.

The House proceeded to the order of the day.

Bartek, in the meanwhile, was in prison, or rather in the infirmary, because the stone had hit his old wound, which had reopened. When he was free from

fever he thought and thought like the turkeycock who died from thinking, but Bartek did not die and nothing came of his thoughts.

Now and then in moments which science calls *lucida intervalla*, it struck him forcibly that he need not have fought quite so desperately, as after all the French had never wronged him. For Magda heavy times were now in store. The fine had to be paid; where was the money to come from. The priest would have helped them, but it appeared that he had no more than forty marks in his purse. The parish was a poor one, and the good old man never knew where all his money went to. Pan Jarzynski was absent; people said he was going to marry a rich young lady on the other side of the frontier.

Magda did not know what to do. To postpone the time of payment was impossible. Spring was always the most

difficult time of the year. Harvest would be coming, money was needed in the house, and there was none. The woman wrung her hands in despair. She sent in several petitions to the court asking for mitigation of Bartek's punishment on account of his service and previous good record. She did not get even an answer. The time of payment was drawing near, if no money were found they would sell their property. She prayed and prayed and thought bitterly how much better off they were before the war, when they had none of their present troubles. She went to her friends to borrow. They had no money. The war had left its traces everywhere. She did not dare to apply for another loan to Just, as she already owed him money on which she had lately been unable to meet the interest.

She was sitting before the cottage one afternoon, doing nothing, because de-

spair had deprived her of all energy. She was staring absently before her, listening to the humming of the bees, and thought how happy were the insects with nothing to pay to anybody. Now and then she sighed wearily. Suddenly above the gateposts appeared the long nose of Herr Just. The woman grew pale. Just called out cheerily:

"Morning."

"How are you, Herr Just?"

"What about my money?"

"Dearest Herr Just, be patient! What is a poor woman to do! They have taken the good man to prison. I have to pay his fine, and do not know what to do. It would be better to die and have done with it than to go on worrying day after day. You will wait a little longer, dear Herr Just, won't you?"

She burst into tears, and bending down, humbly kissed the red hand of Just.

"The Pan Jarzynski will come back; he will lend me the money and then I will pay you."

"And the fine, how will you pay that?"

"I don't know. I may sell a cow."

"I will lend you the money."

"God bless you, good Herr Just. You are a good man, though a Lutheran. If other Germans were like you people wouldn't feel so bitter against them."

"But I cannot let you have it without interest, you know."

"I know, I know."

"Then you can write me out a receipt for the whole sum."

"Very well, dear Herr, the Lord reward you for it."

"I shall be in town shortly and will draw up the agreement."

He went to town and drew up the agreement, but previously Magda went to the priest to ask his advice. What

could he advise her? He said the time of payment was too short and the interest too high, and regretted the absence of Pan Jarzynski, who would have helped her; but Magda could not wait till they sold her out, and was obliged to accept Herr Just's conditions. She borrowed three hundred marks, twice the amount of the fine, because money would be wanted to go on with till harvest time. Magda went to see Bartek, who had to sign the document. The conqueror was much depressed, downhearted, and ill. He wanted to write another petition and complain of his wrongs, but they would not let him. The articles in the "Posener Zeitung" had set public opinion utterly against him. Were not the authorities obliged to protect the quiet German citizens, who had given such proofs of devotion to the fatherland? They were right, therefore, to reject Bartek's petitions. No wonder he felt crushed and dejected.

"We are altogether done for," he said to his wife.

"Altogether," she re-echoed.

"A cruel wrong has been done to me."

"Boege treats the boy shamefully," said Magda. "I went to him and asked him to be a little lenient and he abused me dreadfully. The Germans now have it all their own way. They are not afraid of anybody."

"To be sure they are the strongest," said Bartek sadly.

"I am a plain woman, but I tell you there is one stronger above, and that is the Lord."

"He is our only refuge now."

Both remained silent a little time. Then Bartek asked:

"What about Just?"

"If the Lord gives us a good harvest, we shall be able to pay him right enough. Perhaps the Pan will help us; but he is in debt to Just himself. Before the war

they were saying he would be obliged to sell the estate. Maybe he will get money with his wife. I have heard he will soon come back. The Germans will be down upon him next. They seem to be everywhere swarming like flies about the town and country; it must be in punishment for our sins. No escape for us anywhere!"

"Perhaps you will find a way, you are such a wise woman."

"What can I do? I didn't like to take the money from Just, it is our land he is after. I am not a fool and understand well enough why he pressed the money on me. He is better perhaps than others, but he looks after his own interests; but what could I do?" she said, wringing her hands. "It is your business to say what to do. You would fight the French, and what will you do if you are left without a roof over your head and a mouthful of food?"

The conqueror from Gravelotte grasped his head with both hands. "Oh, Jesus! Jesus!"

Magda was a good-hearted soul and could not bear to see Bartek giving way like that.

"There! there!" she said, "be quiet, laddie, and don't touch your head, it is not healed yet. If there be a good harvest everything will be right. And the rye looks lovely; one should like to kiss the soil that's grown it, and the wheat also. The soil isn't a German and does not wrong us. Through that war of yours it hasn't been so well prepared, and yet it grows to make one's heart rejoice." Honest Magda smiled through her tears.

"No, the soil is not a German," she repeated again.

"Magda," said Bartek, and looked at her with his big eyes, "Magda!"

"What is it?"

"You are—as it were—"

Bartek felt his heart overflowing with gratitude for her goodness, but could not find words to express it.

CHAPTER IX.

Magda was indeed a good woman. She was, perhaps, a little strict with Bartek, but nevertheless sincerely attached to him. At moments, when carried away by anger, as at the inn, she would call him a fool, but at other times she tried her best to make people respect him. Bartek will make you believe he is a fool, she would say, that's only his cunning, he is deep enough for anything. Now Bartek was about as deep as his piebald horse, and without Magda he would not have known what to do. Everything now weighed upon her honest head. She tripped about and went everywhere and at last found what she was in search of. A week after her visit to the prison infirmary she rushed in at Bartek, panting, radiant, and happy.

"How are you, Bartek, my man?" she called out pleasantly. "The Jan Jarzynski has come back; his wife is like a rosebud and has brought him a great fortune."

"And what about that?" asked Bartek.

"Now don't interrupt, silly. Ah! but I'm out of breath altogether. I went to pay my humble duty to the lady and behold: she came out to me like a princess, beautiful and fresh as the rising sun. Ugh! how hot it is and how I am out of breath!"

Magda raised her apron and wiped her face, and continued:

"She was dressed in blue like a pretty forget-me-not. I embraced her knees and she gave me her hand—such a tiny, sweet smelling hand—and I kissed it. She is like a saint in a picture and as good as one, with such feeling for poor people. I asked her to help me . . . God bless her! and she said: 'I will do

for you whatever I can.' And her voice is like music and goes straight to one's heart. And so I told her how miserable the people were in Pognenbin and she said: 'Ah, not alone in Pognenbin;' and then I began to blubber and she cried, too. When the Pan came and saw her crying, he kissed her right on the lips and on the eyes; you see the Pan is different from the likes of you; and then she said to him: 'Do what you can for the poor woman.' And he said: 'Everything in the world, whatever you wish.' May the mother of God bless her and her children that are to come. The Pan said afterwards that we did wrong to borrow money from a German."

Bartek scratched his head perplexedly.

"Why the Pan himself borrowed from the Germans."

"And what of that?" said Magda. "The lady is rich and the Pan could buy up all the Germans in Pognenbin,

so he has the right to talk as he pleases. The Pan says there will be an election shortly, so let the people look sharp and not vote for a German. I will help you to pay Just and put Boege into his proper place. And the lady put her arms round his neck, she was so pleased. Then he asked whether you were still in the infirmary, and if so, whether the doctor would give you a certificate, and if they did not let you off altogether they might allow you to serve your term of imprisonment in winter. The doctor is to come to-day. He is not a German and will give you the certificate. In winter you will have to go back to prison like a king, to be fed and warmly housed for nothing. Now you will come home to work. We will pay Just, and maybe the Pan will not take interest for the money; and if we can't pay it all back by autumn, the lady will stand by us. May the Mother of God bless her! Do you hear?"

"She is a good lady, no doubt about that," said Bartek briskly.

"And mind, Bartek, you throw yourself at her feet, else I shall twist that yellow head of yours off your neck. If the Lord gives us a good harvest all will be right! You see now who comes to our help? What did you get for all those medals? A knock on the head and imprisonment, that's all. Mind you, thank her properly."

"Why shouldn't I?" said Bartek, resolutely.

Fate was once more smiling upon the conqueror. A few days later he received the intimation that he was free until winter. At the same time he received an order to appear before the Landrath. Bartek's soul collapsed in terror. This peasant, who, bayonet in hand, had taken standards and cannons, quailed before anybody in uniform more than before death. There was a dull, undefinable

feeling in his heart that he was persecuted, and that he was helpless in the grasp of an unfriendly power which would crush him if opposed.

He stood before the Landrath straight, with his arms flat against his hips, drawing in his breath, as he had stood before Steinmetz. Some officers were present; the war and discipline of war seemed all at once to have sprung into life again. The officers looked at him through their eye-glasses, proudly and scornfully, as becomes an officer towards a common soldier and Polish peasant. The Landrath spoke to him in a commanding, threatening voice. A member had died at Berlin and a new writ had been issued for Pognenbin and the neighborhood.

"Du polnisches Vich [You Polish beast], vote for Pan Jarzynski, if you dare."

The officers' brows contracted into a lion's frown. One of them viciously

biting off the end of his cigar, repeated after the Landrath:

"Only dare to vote against orders!" with such an expression that it fairly took the conqueror's breath away. He breathed freely once more when he heard the welcome word: "Begone!"

He took a half turn to the left and marched out.

He had received orders to vote for Herr Schulberg, a German land owner of a neighboring village. He did not trouble his mind about the order and was glad to be on his way to Pognenbin, glad he should be at home for the harvest, and glad because the Pan had promised to help him. He left the town behind. All around were fields with ripening corn. The heavy corn ears, moved by the breeze, touched each other with a rustling sound, which music is the dearest to the peasants' hearts. Bartek still felt very weak, but the sun

warmed and did him good. How beautiful the world looks, thought the worn out soldier. And it was now not far from Pognenbin.

CHAPTER X.

The election! the election! Pani Jarzynski, the young bride, thinks of nothing else, her whole mind is absorbed by it.

"My dear madam," says an old nobleman, kissing her hand gallantly, "you are a great politician." And the "great politician" blushes like a cherry and answers with a charming smile:

"We do our best to help the cause."

"Pan Jarzynski is sure to be returned," says the nobleman decisively.

"I desire it beyond everything, not so much for my husband's sake (here the "great politician" blushes again) as for the good of our nation."

"By heavens! a female Bismarck!" exclaims the gentleman, kissing her hand

again, and then both begin a deep conversation about canvassing. The gentleman takes upon himself the neighboring villages and Pani Jarzynski confines herself to Pognenbin. She does not lose time. Every day sees her in the lanes, among the cottages, one hand daintily lifting up her dress to protect it from the dusty roads; the other hand carries a parasol, and from under her skirts peep out the little feet which are untiring in the good cause. She looks into the cottages with a bright smile and friendly greeting; visits the sick, charms all the people, and helps when she can. She would do all this outside of political reasons, for she is kind-hearted; but now she does it all the more eagerly. What would she not do to promote her schemes? Even to her husband she dares not acknowledge her great wish to be present at the peasant meeting, she even thinks she would like to make a speech. Perhaps

if it came to the point she would not have the courage to speak in public, but just now the very idea of it fires her imagination. When the news reached Pognenbin that the authorities had forbidden the peasants' meeting, she cried with vexation, and had to be comforted by her husband. The following day the canvassing in Pognenbin is conducted with still greater ardor. The lady does not shrink from anything. She jeered at the Germans so loudly that her husband has to restrain her. The people receive her smilingly and kiss her hands. She is so dainty and beautiful that her presence seems to brighten everything. When in its turn she enters Bartek's cabin, Lysek bars the way, and Magda in her anger knocks him on the head with a piece of wood.

"Oh, Gracious Lady! my beauty! my flower!" exclaims Magda, nestling up to her hands.

Bartek, according to received orders, prostrates himself before her, Frank first kisses her hand, then puts his finger into his mouth and retreats to admire her from a corner.

"I hope," says the lady after the greetings are over, "I hope, Bartek, you will vote for my husband and not for Herr Schulberg."

"Oh, my sunlight!" exclaims Magda, "who would vote for Schulberg?"

"May he be struck by apoplexy! I beg your pardon," she says, kissing her hand again, "but one is so carried away when one thinks of them that it's difficult to command one's tongue."

"My husband told me that he intended to help you to pay off Just's debt."

"The Lord bless him a thousand fold!" Here Magda turns towards Bartek:

"Why do you stand there like a stick? He is terribly bashful, please, my lady."

"You will vote for my husband, won't you? You are a Pole, and we are Poles; we ought to stand by one another."

"I should wring his neck if he did not vote for him," says Magda.

"Why do you stand there like a wooden image? He is not very ready with his tongue. Wake up!"

Bartek kisses the lady's hand, but remains silent and looks as black as night. He is thinking of the Landrath.

The day of the election arrives. Pan Jarzynski feels quite satisfied as to the result. Neighbors and friends arrive, the gentlemen who have given their votes in town are returning and are waiting for news which the priest is to bring shortly. After that there will be a dinner and in the evening the master and mistress of the house will leave for Posen, and thence to Berlin. Some of

the villages voted the day before, but the result will be announced to-day. The company generally is full of spirit. The young bride herself is a little restless, but so radiant and charming that all agree on one point, that the owner of Pognenbin has found in her a real treasure. The real treasure is moving about feverishly; she assures every one that the election is sure to be in favor of her husband; assures them, too, that it is not mere ambition which makes her wish to be the wife of a member, but that she and her husband consider they have a sacred duty and a mission to perform. Sometimes she approaches her husband, pulls him by the sleeve, and whispers something into his ear. He smiles, and both look perfectly happy. They are all hopefully waiting, for the cause is nationally important. The late Member of the Reichstag had been a Pole, and it is the first time a German has contested

the election. The victorious war has induced this boldness; and they are exceedingly anxious that their candidate should be returned. There is no lack of patriotic speeches, which move the young mistress of the house very much, as she comes from a country where such utterances are interdicted. At moments she has strange misgivings: The committee is composed mainly of Germans. Suppose some fraud should be committed in the counting of the votes? The older gentlemen explain to her how the voting is done. She has heard it before; but wishes to hear it again; for upon these votes depends whether a friend or a foe of her people shall sit in the Reichstag.

A few moments more and all will be decided, for a cloud of dust is seen rising on the road. "The priest is coming," they call out. The lady changes color, on all faces there is excitement. They

feel certain of victory, yet the last moment makes their hearts beat faster. But it is not the priest after all, only the bailiff, coming back from town on horseback. Perhaps he knows something? He ties his horse to a tree and hastens up to the house. The visitors, and the lady of the house, stream out into the porch.

"Is there any news? Has our candidate been elected? Has the result been announced?"

Questions cross each other and fall like rockets about the bailiff's ear, and the peasant throws his cap into the air.

"Our master has been elected!"

The young mistress suddenly sits down from sheer excitement. The guests cheer loudly.

The servants come from the kitchen and cheer. "The German has been defeated! Long live our deputy, and his lady!"

"And his Reverence?" asks somebody.

"His Reverence will be here directly," replies the bailiff. "They are counting a few remaining votes."

"Let dinner be ready at once," says the newly-elected deputy. They all return to the drawing room. The congratulations are becoming a little less demonstrative. Nobody is at all astonished to see the young bride throw her arms round her husband's neck in the exuberance of her joy; they are all affected by the same feeling. The sound of wheels now becomes audible and presently His Reverence enters the room, followed by old Mathew.

"Welcome! welcome!" call out the assembled guests. "Who has been elected?"

The priest looks silently around, sees all the joyful, expectant faces, and says, as if flinging down the word;

"Schulberg!"

A moment's astonishment, and then like hailstones were the questions, to which the priest replies again:

"Schulberg has been elected!"

Jarzynski leads aside his wife, who convulsively gnaws at her handkerchief so as not to cry out or faint.

"What a misfortune! what a blow!" say the assembled guests.

Presently a loud cheering is heard in the distance; it comes from the German settlers rejoicing over their victory. Pani Jarzynski again appears amongst her guests; her eyes are dry, but two red spots burn on her cheeks.

"Tell me how it happened," says the master of the house quietly.

"How could it have fallen out otherwise when the peasants of Pognenbin voted for Schulberg?"

"What? Our own people?"

"That's just it. I have seen with my own eyes, and so did others, how Bartek Slovik voted for Schulberg."

"Bartek Slovik?" says the lady.

"Ah! the same." Now they all rail at him. The man grovels on the floor and cries, and his wife scolds him.

"He deserves to be driven from the village," says one of the neighbors.

"Nay! Illustrious Pan," says Mathew, "others have done the same; they say they were ordered."

"It's an abuse, a clear case of undue pressure; the election is a farce and ought to be invalidated," cries out some voices.

It was not a gay dinner this day in the manor of Pognenbin.

Miserable, abused, and shunned by everybody, sat Bartek in his cabin, shunned even by his wife, who has not spoken a word to him the whole day.

There had been a good harvest and Herr Just was pleased, for he had taken possession of Bartek's property, and was abundantly satisfied with the turn of affairs.

It was a drizzly, autumnal day when three persons were wending their way from Pognenbin village towards the town: a man, a woman, and a child. The man's back was bent and he looked old and worn out. They were going to town because they could find no work in the village. It rained heavily, and the woman sobbed bitterly at leaving her own home and the familiar village. No human beings were stirring or any vehicles seen about; the road was entirely deserted; only the village cross stood there, its long arms wet from the rain. It rained harder and harder, and everything looked gloomy and mournful.

Bartek, Magda, and Frank were going to town, because the conqueror from Gravelotte and Sedan had to serve out his term in prison for the assault on Herr Boege, the schoolmaster.

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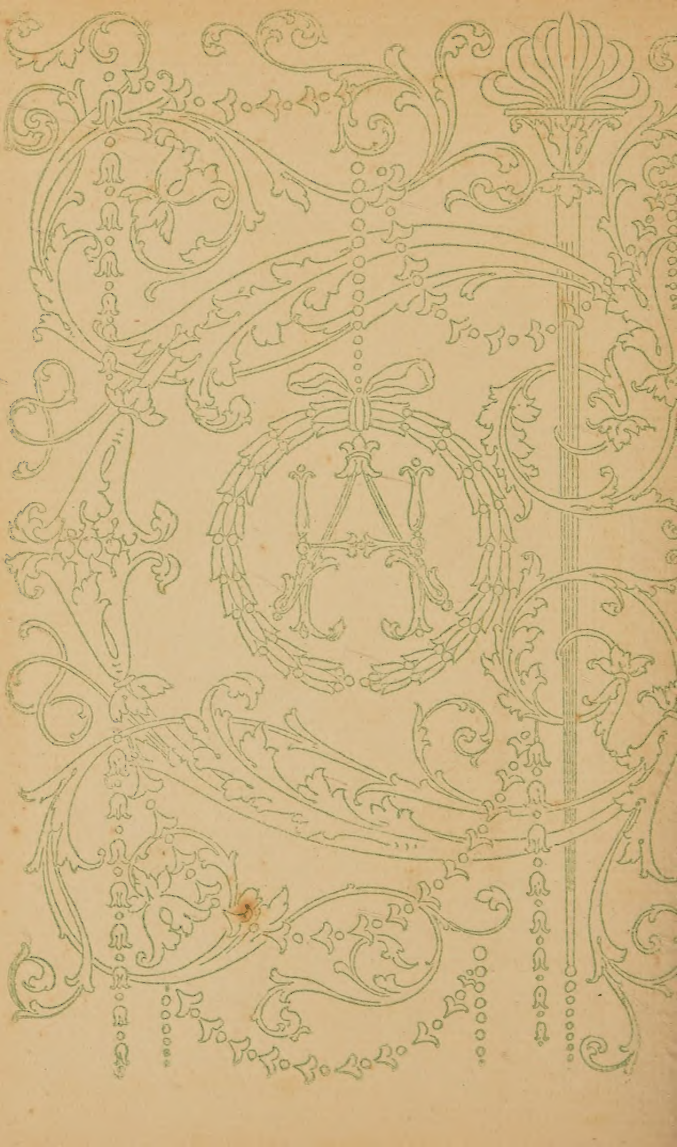

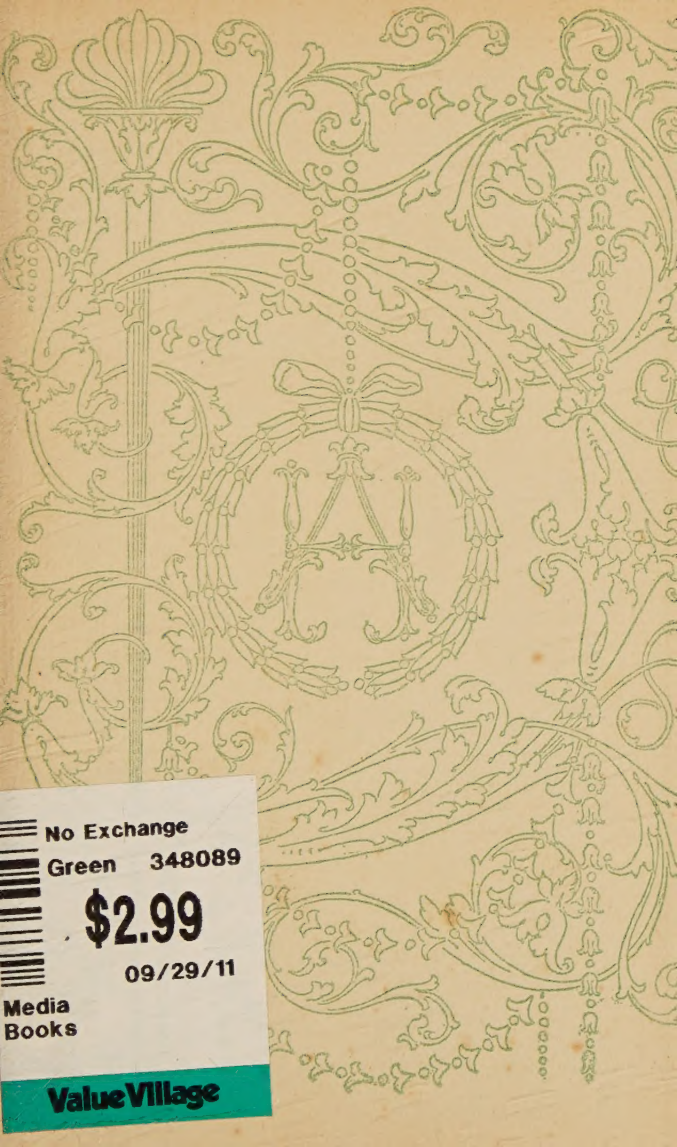

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